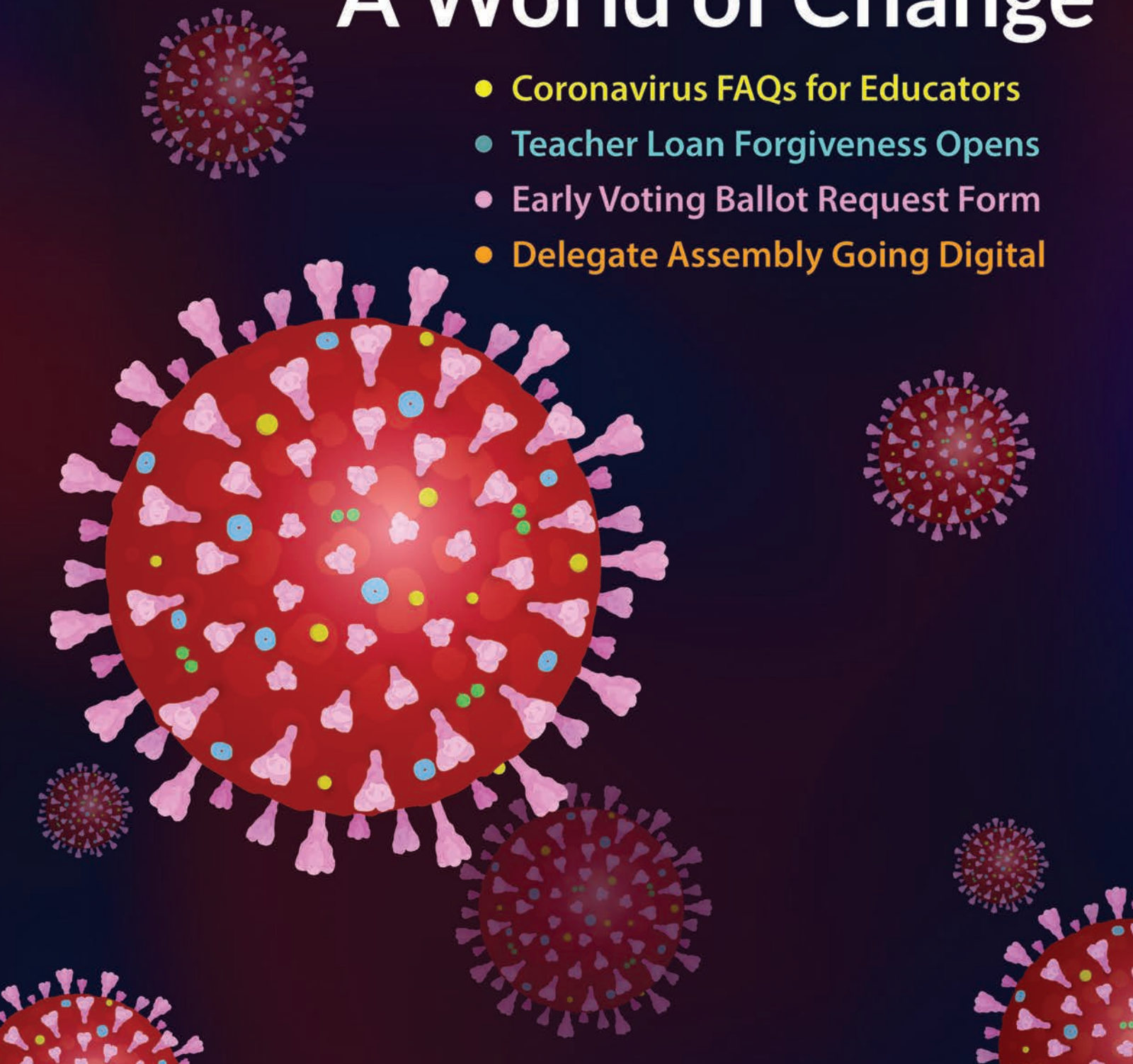


# The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • April 2020

## A World of Change

- **Coronavirus FAQs for Educators**
- **Teacher Loan Forgiveness Opens**
- **Early Voting Ballot Request Form**
- **Delegate Assembly Going Digital**



# THE VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association  
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## A Great Public School for Every Child.

# Breakfast Now Available at Another 20 School Sites

## 'Go Big Breakfast' Grants Assist Districts in 'No Kid Hungry' Effort

Students in 20 Nebraska school buildings will soon be starting their days with more energy and healthier diets thanks to the Go Big Breakfast coalition and the No Kid Hungry campaign.

Over the past few months, Go Big Breakfast offered grants of up to \$5,000 to help fund switching to or starting an alternative breakfast program like grab and go, second chance, or breakfast in the classroom.

Each of these alternative options have a higher average participation percentage than traditional cafeteria service, making more students able to access healthy meals to start the day. All told, 33 Nebraska schools applied for the grant dollars and 20 were awarded a total of \$56,000, with funding supported by the No Kid Hungry campaign.

These school buildings received funding through Go Big Breakfast / No

Kid Hungry breakfast grants

- Alliance Public Schools: Emerson Elementary, Grandview Elementary, Alliance Middle School
  - Cedar Bluffs Elementary School
  - Dundy County Stratton Public Schools: Stratton High School, Benkelman Elementary School
  - Gering Junior High
  - Grand Island Public Schools: Barr Middle School
  - Hay Springs Public Schools: Hay Springs High School, Middle School, Elementary School
  - Minden Public Schools: Minden High School, CL Jones Middle School, East Elementary School
  - Plainview Public Schools: Plainview Secondary School
  - Schuyler Central High School
  - Seward High School
  - Stanton Community Schools: Stanton High School and Stanton Elementary School
  - York Middle School
- If you'd like to learn more about breakfast in your school or district, visit:  
[gobigbreakfast.org/mapping-breakfast](http://gobigbreakfast.org/mapping-breakfast)

## You Can Assist the Children's Fund

In trying to address the enormous need Nebraska school children face in these tough times, the Children's Fund itself is facing serious financial difficulty, and could be drained almost completely by the end of the current school year.

There are three ways you can help keep the Children's Fund afloat:

First, send a contribution, which is tax deductible. Memorial gifts are accepted, and retirement donations are also a nice way to honor someone's service to the education profession.

Ask your local association to consider an annual gift to the Children's Fund.

Fourth, organize a local benefit for the Fund. For ideas, go to the NSEA website at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)

## Would You Like to Write for The Voice?

Would you like to write an item for *The Voice*? Would you like to write an opinion column or an article on what is working in your classroom?

NSEA would like to begin a regular page for members, entitled Voice from the Classroom. Submissions can be classroom-related, humorous, inspiring or otherwise teaching related.

Submit your questions about the process, and your topics to us at:

[thevoice@nsea.org](mailto:thevoice@nsea.org)

**On the Cover:** The world has changed dramatically in the last six weeks. School has been suspended at all levels and business and offices have sent employees out the door to work from home. The flow of learning has been upended, as well, and NSEA has taken the lead in restarting that learning through Facebook Live events, educational broadcasts and more. Learn the details starting on Page 15.



# A Seismic Shift

Today, March 23, we watched Lincoln Public Schools teachers Karen Kovil and Jodie Jantz do a great lesson on earthquakes and their impact on Mount Everest. We weren't watching them in their classroom, we were watching them on Teacher TV, a program that didn't exist a week ago.

Our entire world has undergone a seismic shift in the last few weeks. Teachers, families and our whole society has been hit with another kind of earthquake – COVID-19.

Just as in any crisis, information has been incredibly dynamic, changing from hour to hour as we all work to make sure our students, staff and loved ones are safe. But we also want to minimize the impact this disruption will have over the long term, so we are trying to find some kind of “new normal” as we provide continuity of instruction in a way we have NEVER done before.

We have struggled to write a column that will remain relevant between the day of writing and when it lands in your mailbox. So, we decided to focus on grace and facts.

## **The Grace**

■ This situation treats us ALL as if we are first-year teachers. Give yourself some grace to learn and don't expect to be perfect from the get-go.

■ Everyone in our education family – teachers, support staff, administrators, school boards, students, parents – are trying to make the best decisions they can. Give folks the grace to make mistakes and offer your help to problem solve.

■ People are afraid. For themselves, their loved ones, their finances. Give them the grace to be a bit short tempered. Offer and accept apologies.

■ Once the frenzy subsides a bit and we are settled in, take a few moments to do something you always wanted to do at home. Give yourself the grace to use your time unwisely for a change!

## **The Facts**

■ NSEA has your back. You can still reach us when you need us. We have gone virtual and are working at home, just like most of you. You can call 800-742-0047, email your organizational specialist (see map at [nsea.org/field-staff-units](http://nsea.org/field-staff-units)) or email us (addresses below).

■ The most up-to-date information will be on our website and amplified through Facebook and Twitter.

■ In just 72 hours, teachers in Kansas came up with AMAZING comprehensive guidance on continuous learn-

ing. You can find it here [bit.ly/2wLYAKB](http://bit.ly/2wLYAKB). This is a great tool for your district to utilize as you structure what learning from home will look like for your students.

■ The Nebraska Department of Education is also working to get accurate information out to stakeholders. Their website is being updated regularly at: [education.ne.gov/publichealth/resources/](http://education.ne.gov/publichealth/resources/)

■ On page 16 of this edition are instructions to update your email, phone and address information. Please take a minute to make sure we know how to reach you! If you are struggling to get it changed, just send us an email at [info@nsea.org](mailto:info@nsea.org) with the correct information.

■ We are helping to bridge the “digital divide” by offering four hours of daily instruction through Teacher TV. We are so proud of this partnership with the Nebraska News Channel and Lincoln Public Schools that has our teachers providing lessons to kids across the state on multiple platforms. You can read more – and find out how to volunteer – on page 16.



**NSEA  
President  
Jenni Benson**



**Executive  
Director  
Maddie Fennell**

“

*...we also want to minimize  
the impact this disruption will have  
over the long term, so we are trying  
to find some kind of ‘new normal’  
as we provide continuity  
of instruction in a way  
we have never done before.*

”

## **‘Never in Our Lives...’**

In a letter sent by NDE Commission Matt Blomstedt to his staff he shared these words:

*“Never in our lives have we been exposed to such a foe as we believe this moment of pandemic presents to us now. Our foe is unseen, silent, and seemingly creeps up on us overnight...This foe has organized fear as a powerful ally...People are caring and people are capable of love and reason that can calm fear.*

*“People are the ones that are going to work to defeat our foe at every level in our society. People are the ones that are going to find ways to take care of themselves while they organize to help others. People are going to be organizing and outsmarting our foe. People are going to have to use our tools that do not advance our foe but instead slow it until we can defeat it. People are all of you as the dedicated public servants that are going to work together to understand our common enemies.”*

As teachers, we often hear our students exclaim “This is HARD!” to which we would reply “I know, but you can do it, I can help!”

What we are all facing now is hard. But NSEA is prepared and ready to help in any way we can.

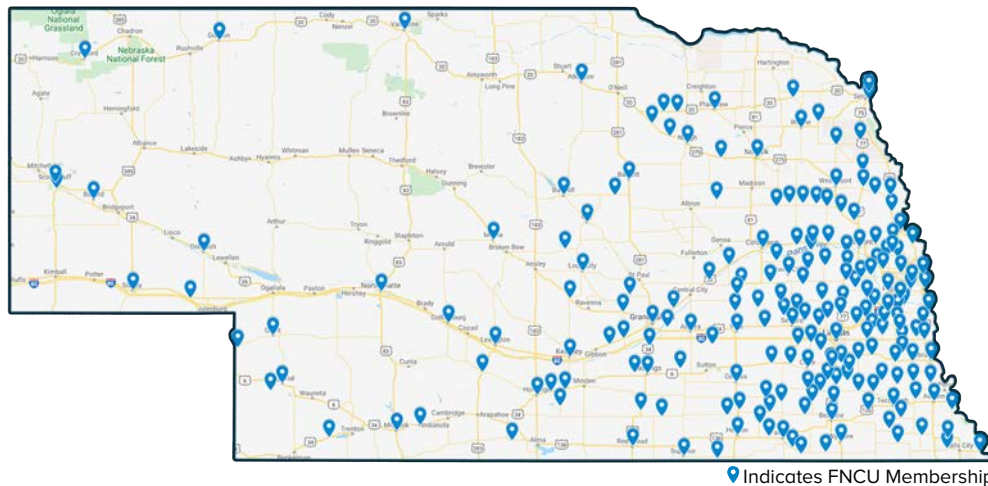
**Jenni Benson:** [jenni.benson@nsea.org](mailto:jenni.benson@nsea.org)

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# NDE Launches Recertification Portal

## TEACH Includes Dashboard, Real-time Communication Feature

A new system for teacher certification and recertification applications has been launched by the Nebraska Department of Education.

The Educator Application and Certification Hub (TEACH) is now the educator certification system for new applications and renewals. It was launched in February.

The system includes an individual dashboard allowing for real-time communication between the applicant and a certification analyst. It also offers:

- timely status updates sent via text message and email;
- a dashboard checklist notifying applicants of what is needed to complete the certification process;
- college and district transcripts, test scores, and forms directly uploaded or imported;

## 'It Wasn't a Stuffy Presentation'

### Bellevue EA's Membership Video was 'Short, Sweet and Fun'

As Bellevue Education Association President Lynne Henkel assessed the BEA's 2018 New Teacher Luncheon, she considered what had gone well and what might be improved.

She knew that past practice had been to invite new teachers to attend yet another meeting – after they had already spent the morning in district-led meetings. Even with lunch provided, it was more “sit-and-get.”

“We essentially made them sit through another meeting, with information delivered via a PowerPoint presentation,” said Henkel “I felt we could do better and be more effective if we looked at doing something more engaging and fun.”

What Henkel and her team decided on was an approach any local association can do using widely available technology and software: they filmed a membership video.

Henkel and her leadership team decided a short video featuring BEA members speaking about the value of membership would be effective. Henkel penciled out ideas for a fun and relaxing agenda, including time for the new teachers to unwind and socialize and to start building relationships with BEA building reps and leaders – all before showing the video.

Henkel drafted a tentative storyboard, began lining up the “talent” and then scheduled filming for May. She wrote out a short script about 20 minutes before taping began.

“I wanted to emphasize our organization's core beliefs, explain how we carry them out as an organization and how much importance we place on building relationships with each other, with building administration and with district administration,” she said.

Most of the comments from members came from the heart and were not scripted. “The participants knew what questions would be asked ahead of time, so I'm sure they were thinking about their answers,” she said.

■ and a shortened, adaptive application process, with only what is needed – nothing more.

The personal applicant dashboard provides secure communications between the applicant, the school district and the college or university. The dashboard will allow access to historical data and an opportunity to add items throughout the process.

There is also a checklist of needed items provided to each applicant. If the type of certificate changes (initial, standard, professional, transition, etc), the system will change the checklist in real time to reflect the new certificate type.

Fee payments will be made within the system and will not require a secondary website.

TEACH also includes built-in efficiencies that will allow for some applications to be approved quickly or without going through a review process. To learn more, go to:

<https://online.nedoe.org>



**Easy, Peasy:** Bellevue Education Association President Lynne Henkel, left, with Vice President A.J. Bowen, at NSEA University last summer.

The video was shot using a Canon T7i and was edited using Adobe Premiere. BEA member Julie Rowse shot the video and member Aaron Stueve made final edits. Set up and filming took about three hours; editing took another eight hours.

The resulting four-minute film was shown to an audience of nearly 100 teachers who were new to Bellevue. The video set a different, congenial tone, she said.

“It wasn't a stuffy, boring presentation, but was short, sweet and fun,” she said. “I think they enjoyed the change of pace. It had real people talking about the importance of joining our professional association, and how we make a difference in teachers' lives,” said Henkel.

“It's important for new teachers to join their professional organization so they have access to important information for professional development, can stay up-to-date on legislative actions during the legislative session and can have an avenue for addressing concerns such as working conditions,” said Henkel.

For information on how Bellevue leadership turned the video concept into reality, contact Henkel at:

[bea.leadership@gmail.com](mailto:bea.leadership@gmail.com)



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**Red in the Rotunda:** These Lincoln Education Association members were among those wearing 'Red for Ed' during a lobby day for members of the Omaha and Lincoln education associations. From left are Jake Bogus, Julene Leshar, Stephanie Nantkes, Gina Boltz and Brittney Hodges-Bolkovac.

## Unfinished Business

### Legislative Leaders Suspend Session in Deference to COVID-19 Pandemic

With barely 40 days of a scheduled 60-day session completed, members of the Nebraska Legislature called a halt to debate at the start of the third week of March, paying deference to the seriousness of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Much consideration was given to the health of the 49 state senators, many of whom are considered high risk because of age or medical conditions. Even those long-time watchers of the Legislature could not recall an instance of legislative suspension like the delay caused by COVID-19.

After suspension of the session on March 16, lawmakers reconvened for a few hours on March 23 and March 25 to take up an emergency appropriation package, LB1198, in response to the pandemic.

The governor's office proposed and the Legislature adopted AM2976 containing \$83.6 million in emergency appropriations, which will include the following: \$38.1 million for public health efforts to respond to the virus; \$17 million for the Department of Health and Human Services to cover increased staffing and overtime at state-run care facilities; \$3 million for COVID-19 testing; \$344,000 for health and county emergency communications; and \$25 million in additional discretionary funding.

The appropriations package was passed with an emergency clause, allowing it to take effect as soon as the governor signed it into law.

No announcement has been made regarding other pending 2020 legislation. Remaining in limbo are the budget bill, LB1008, which is waiting for second round debate; the property tax bills LB974 and LB1106; the

education lottery bill, LB920; the student discipline bill, LB147; and the injury leave bill, LB1186. It is likely the Legislature will meet for the remaining 17 legislative session days once the crisis ends. Until a formal adjournment is announced, all legislation remains alive and subject to debate and passage. Here is the status of key bills as action resumed on Monday, March 23:

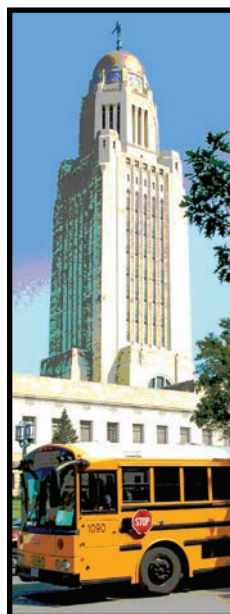
### State Aid, Property Tax Reform

A plan purported to provide property tax relief that had been embodied in LB974 may gain new time on the debate clock when the Legislature resumes. Supporters plan to amend a slightly revised version into LB1106, but that had not happened when legislative action was suspended. Even if it does happen, it will be a case of "new bill number, same foul funding plan."

As with LB974, the "new" plan proposes permanent changes to the state aid formula while using unreliable and uncertain projected increases in state aid to pay for short-term property tax reduction.

The plan reduces state aid sent when a student transfers into the district from the current \$10,000 to \$6,730; cuts the maximum allowable special building fund levy from 12 cents to 6 cents; and reduces an existing school budget lid from 2.5 percent to 2 percent. Combined, these provisions add up to a drastic curtailment of a school district's revenue stream.

NSEA remains opposed to the plan and favors instead LB1073, offered by Sen. Wendy DeBoer, as well as DeBoer's LB1023, which would increase special education funding from state resources. NSEA also favors an increase in the state's property tax relief fund.



**Nebraska Legislature '20**

### Student Discipline Act

Sen. Mike Groene's bill, supported by NSEA, re-



mains on General File awaiting further debate and a vote on advancement to second round consideration. The bill would change the Student Discipline Act to provide for use by a teacher or administrator of necessary physical contact and provide procedures for removal from a class in response to behavior. The bill reportedly has the votes to advance handily but has trended down the priority ladder as time grew short and property taxes and budget issues floated to the top.

In mid-March NSEA sent a letter signed by President Jenni Benson to all senators urging support and further action on LB147. Benson wrote that opponents of this legislation are falsely claiming the bill provides “blanket immunity” for school personnel who use reasonable physical intervention to manage the behavior of a student.

“The fact is that such intervention must be reasonable and must be used only to protect the student, other students or staff from physical injury. Further, please know that our members have committed their professional lives to the students of Nebraska. We are deeply offended by those who say educators supporting this bill want to hurt children.”

### Salary for Injured School Employees

LB1186, by Sen. Mike Hilgers of Lincoln, would provide up to seven days of leave for school employees injured by violence during the course of their employment duties. Hilgers introduced the bill at NSEA’s request, and it passed a first round vote 43-0.



**Faith and Justin:** Omaha Education Association member Faith Johnson, right, spoke to Sen. Justin Wayne during a Red for Ed lobby day at the state capitol in March.

### Student Relationships

LB1080 sailed through first-round consideration on a 39-0 vote. LB1080 is Sen. Steve Lathrop’s bill that would require all school districts to adopt a policy barring sexual contact between school employees and current or former students, the latter for up to a year after they leave school.

Four other bills barring improper relationships remain in committee, including a bill that would create the offense of sexual assault by a school employee and provide notification to the Commissioner of Education. Also left unfinished was a bill that would create the offense of sexual exploitation of a student.

### Community College Aid

LB894 (Stinner) would appropriate funding for dual enrollment expenses in support of work community colleges do to prepare students for high-skilled jobs. Without the funding, community college students would see diminished opportunity. NSEA supports LB894, which remains in committee.

### Response Plans

LB1217 (Wayne) would require school districts to devise individualized response plans following the report of certain types of violent incidents involving students. LB1217 was introduced on NSEA’s behalf. It remains in committee.

### Mental Health Exception

LB751 (Blood) would provide for a mental health exception to

## Senators Act on Youth Treatment Center Needs, Advance Four Bills

The Legislature has advanced a set of bills aimed at addressing long-running problems at the state’s Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers (YRTC) in Kearney and Geneva. NSEA supports these proposals and believes they are a step in the right direction to ensure learning conditions for students and working conditions for NSEA member teachers in these facilities continue to improve.

LB1188 would mandate the Office of Juvenile Services to establish a superintendent of schools to administer education programs at the YRTCs by Aug. 1. Deputy Commissioner of Education Deborah Frison has been appointed to that post. She is former principal at Omaha Burke High School.

LB1188 also requires that the state institution for juvenile offenders in Kearney revert to a male-only by July 1, 2021, and that a similar institution in Geneva serve only females, if it remains open. LB1188 advanced on a 32-4 vote.

The current situation, in which the Kearney center houses 84 teenage boys and 21 teen girls, creates problems and risks.

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) officials moved female juvenile offenders to the Kearney facility in August after concluding that staff shortages, inadequate programming and deteriorating buildings had combined to create a crisis at Geneva.

### NDE will Administer YRTC Education

Near the end of the first week of March the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) entered into a contract with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) authorizing the NDE to oversee and administer the schools and education programs provided by the DHHS facility-based schools.

The agreement applies to the schools and education programs operated by the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers in Kearney and Geneva, the Hastings Regional Center, the Lincoln Regional Center—Whitehall Campus, and any additional facility-based schools that may be operated by the DHHS. This agreement is in effect through August 31, 2020.

The YRTC sites at Kearney and Geneva includes about 30 NSEA member educators.

assaults, escapes, attempted suicides, self-harm, property damage and violations of the Prison Rape Elimination Act. It passed 43-0.

■ LB1148, which would provide the treatment plan developed for each juvenile to the committing court and interested parties. It passed 35-1.

In the package, lawmakers also approved:

■ LB1140, which would define YRTCs in statute and list the requirements to provide such things as safe and sanitary space for sleeping, hygiene, education, programming, treatment, recreation and visitation, and sufficient staffing. It passed 45-0.

■ LB1144 would require the juvenile services division to report to the inspector general for child welfare instances such as



compulsory education requirements.

LB751 would allow schools to do that via a simple language change that acknowledges mental illness as equivalent to physical and behavioral issues that affect student attendance.

### Final Words of Testimony

In the weeks before the Legislature's shutdown, and in the final days of committees taking testimony, NSEA testified or wrote letters on numerous pieces of legislation. A brief synopsis follows.

### Bullying Prevention

Omaha Sen. Wendy DeBoer offered LB967, which would school district policies to include a clear definition of bullying as well as procedures for reporting and investigating bullying. NSEA supports of LB967, which remains in committee.

### Special Education Costs

DeBoer also offered LB1023, the Extraordinary Increase in Special Education Cost Act. NSEA President Jenni Benson, a special education teacher for more than 30 years, told the Education Committee the provisions of LB1023 that appropriate an additional \$3 million for special education programs in Nebraska schools, was an important step forward.

LB1023 is supported by NSEA and remains in committee.

### Loyalty Oath

Sen. Megan Hunt introduced LB1177, which would eliminate an archaic requirement that school employees swear an oath of allegiance. Such a practice has been found more than once to be unconstitutional as an infringement on First Amendment rights, including in a 1967 case in Nebraska. LB1177 sits in committee.

### Early Childhood Reporting

NSEA gave support to LB1206, by Omaha Sen. Tony Vargas, which would require, rather than allow, early childhood educators to report their educational degrees, professional credentials and relevant training to the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System.

NSEA supports LB1206, which remains in committee.

### Sales Tax Changes

NSEA delivered a letter of opposition to the Revenue Committee as it considered LR284CA, a constitutional amendment that would prohibit the state from imposing an income tax beginning in 2024. It remains in committee.

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# '20 Delegate Assembly Goes Virtual

## Pandemic Results in Format Change for Annual Meeting

NSEA's founding fathers could not have envisioned the advancements that have taken place over the past 153 years. In particular they likely did not foresee technology that would allow members to meet without actually meeting face-to-face.

Yet that is what will happen as NSEA's 2020 Delegate Assembly will go on as scheduled, despite the social distancing requirements caused by the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Elected delegates will convene in late April for the 158th Delegate Assembly since the Association was founded in October 1867. The estimated 300 delegates will do so using the Zoom video conferencing platform.

With state and federal limits on events and gatherings now at 10 or fewer people, the Zoom platform was the best option, said NSEA President Jenni Benson.

"This will be unlike any Delegate Assembly ever held," said Benson. "We've confident this will work and will pave the way for more such meetings in the future."

It is also a better alternative to what happened to the 1918 NSEA Delegate Assembly which was canceled due to the Spanish flu pandemic.

### Watch the U.S. Mail

Benson noted two important considerations for local leaders and delegates.

First, local association leaders must report all elected delegate information to NSEA no later than Monday, April 6.

Second, elected delegates will receive a letter through the U.S. Mail, as well as an email, with Delegate Assembly details as well as information about use of the Zoom platform.

In the meantime, delegates should make certain that their mailing address and email information on file with NSEA is current. To do so, follow the instructions under the 'Update Your In-

formation' header on page 16.

### Zoom, Zoom

Delegates will have the opportunity to utilize Zoom twice, once during the Thursday evening, April 23, budget hearing, and again Saturday morning, April 25, when the General Session convenes.

On the agenda Saturday are some vital Association issues: election of president, vice president and one of NSEA's two positions on the NEA Board of Directors.

Delegates will also consider a dues increase of \$3 for the 2020-21 Association year. With the exception of two years ago, the 0.72 percent increase is the smallest increase by percentage in at least 25 years (see opposite page for dues details).

### Awards Delayed

There were no proposed changes to NSEA Bylaws submitted this year, so that will shorten the length of the Assembly. In the absence of proposed changes to Bylaws, the NSEA Board of Directors has chosen to focus the Assembly's efforts this year on elections, reports, Audit Committee report and approval, and consideration of a \$3 increase in dues for 2020-21.

Absent from the Delegate Assembly agenda this year:

■ While nominations were received for the Horace Mann Awards, recipients will be honored during NSEA University July 14-16 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Innovation Campus (See page 27).

■ The Friday night professional development that was such a success the past two years was canceled. Most sessions that had been scheduled will become a part of NSEA University.

■ There will be no keynote address. "We are trying to make this year's event as smooth and as sleek as possible," said Benson. "We want to get as much work done in as short a period of time as possible."

"And we'll return bigger and better in 2021," said Benson. "Delegates, we will be in touch."



**Benson**



**Fennell**

## Tentative Order of Business NSEA Virtual Delegate Assembly 2020

**President Jenni Benson, Lincoln,  
Presiding**

**Thursday, April 23, 2020**

**7 p.m.: Budget Hearing**

**Saturday, April 25, 2020**

**9 a.m.: Call to Order, Pledge**

- ◆ Credentials Committee Report
- ◆ Adopt Standing/Procedural Rules
- ◆ Adoption of Order of Business

**Overview of Delegate Assembly**

**Introduction of NSEA Executive Team, Board of Directors, Staff**

**Nomination of Candidates**

- ◆ President
- ◆ Vice President
- ◆ NEA Director

**Candidate Remarks**

**Voting**

**Legislative Update:**

NSEA Director of Public Policy and Legislative Research Jason Hayes

**Elections Update:**

Director of Political Field Operations Brian Mikkelsen

**Annual Report:**

President Jenni Benson,  
Executive Director Maddie Fennell

**Elections Report**

**Audit Review Committee Report**

**Committee Reports**

**Debate, Voting on 2020-21 Dues**

**Special Guests**

**Message from Leadership Team**

**Announcements**

**Adjournment**

*Parliamentarian: John Heineman*



# 2020-21 NSEA Dues Recommendation

## Dues for Certificated Staff

The NSEA Board of Directors has recommended the following annual fee structure for Association membership by certificated staff. Delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly on April 25 will consider and act on this proposal. For the 2020-21 Association year, the NSEA Board of Directors recommends the dues for these certificated classes of NSEA membership be as follows:

**Active: \$416      Half-time Active: \$208      Active Substitute: \$208      Non-Active Sub: \$104**

The total NSEA dues and assessments for 2019-20 were \$413. The total NSEA dues and assessments for the current year and the proposal for next year are summarized below:

	2019-20	2020-21	Change (%)
General Fund Dues.....	\$388	\$391	\$3 .....(.77%)
Ballot Contingency Fund.....	\$10	\$10	\$0 .....(0%)
State PAC.....	\$15	\$15	\$0 .....(0%)
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>\$413</b>	<b>\$416</b>	<b>\$3 .... (.72%)</b>

The Ballot Contingency Fund is used when proposed ballot initiatives or referenda affect public education. The NSEA Political Action Fund (PAC) supports member-recommended pro-education candidates.

All amounts listed are for state dues only. NEA dues for 2020-21 have been proposed at no more than \$200, a \$4 increase.

As noted, the 2020-21 dues amount for full-time, active members of NSEA includes a voluntary contribution of \$15 to NSEA's Political Action Fund and \$7.50 for half-time active members and active substitute members. This contribution is refundable upon receipt of a written, individually-composed request. A reminder of the opportunity to seek a refund is published in the January issue of the NSEA Voice.

## Dues for Educational Support Professionals

Delegates to the 2001 Delegate Assembly approved a separate dues structure for Educational Support Professionals (ESP). That action created four levels of dues for ESP members, and the NSEA Board of Directors modified the ESP dues structure to a six-tiered structure. The ESP dues structure is motivated by an effort to establish equity between the wide range of ESP salaries, while taking into consideration the fact that beginning teachers or teachers in lower-paid school districts are still paying full NSEA dues. In this model, the ESP member's total base salary, regardless of the hours or number of days worked, establishes the state dues for that member. The percentages are based on the lowest starting teacher salary in the state, which was \$33,150 in 2020-21.

ESP Dues Tier	NSEA Dues
<b>Active ESP</b> (salary of \$33,150 or more) .....	<b>\$416.00</b> (100 percent of teacher dues)
<b>Active ESP</b> (\$26,520 to \$33,149) .....	<b>\$374.40</b> (90 percent of teacher dues)
<b>Active ESP</b> (\$19,890 to \$26,519) .....	<b>\$291.20</b> (70 percent of teacher dues)
<b>Active ESP</b> (\$13,260 to \$19,889) .....	<b>\$208.00</b> (50 percent of teacher dues)
<b>Active ESP</b> (\$6,630 to \$13,259) .....	<b>\$124.80</b> (30 percent of teacher dues)
<b>Active ESP</b> (\$6,629 or less) .....	<b>\$41.60</b> (10 percent of teacher dues)

## NSEA Dues History

Budget Year	NSEA Dues	Percent Increase
2020-21	\$416	0.72
2019-20	\$413	1.45
2018-19	\$407	0.002
2017-18	\$406	1.75
2016-17	\$399	3.10
2015-16	\$387	0.78
2014-15	\$384	1.05
2013-14	\$380	1.06
2012-13	\$376	1.08
2011-12	\$372	4.20
2010-11	\$357	2.00



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COUN	534	Fundamentals of Assessment	3	June 8 - July 31
COUN	535	Multicultural Counseling	3	May 11 - July 3
COUN	536	Family Development	3	June 8 - July 31
COUN	541	Counseling Theories	3	June 8 - July 31
COUN	630	Crisis Counseling	3	June 8 - July 31
COUN	631	Principles and Practices of Mental Health	3	May 11 - July 3
COUN	635	School Counseling	3	June 8 - July 31
EDAD	629	Fundamentals of School Admin	3	June 8 - July 31
EDAD	632	Supervision of Instruction	3	June 8 - July 31
EDAD	633	School Admin and Leadership	3	June 8 - July 31
EDAD	634	School Bus Mgmt/Finance	3	June 8 - July 31
EDAD	638	Personnel Administration	3	June 8 - July 31
EDCI	631	Research Design/Data Analysis	3	June 8 - July 31
EDCI	633	Educational Philosophy	3	May 11 - June 5
EDCI	635	Curriculum Development	3	June 8 - July 31
EDCI	638	School Law	3	May 11 - July 3
EDUC	534	Technology in Instructional Strategies	3	July 6 - July 31
READ	532	Reading in Content Fields	3	May 11 - July 31
READ	635	Diagnosis and Correction	3	June 8 - July 3
READ	638	Seminar in Reading: Issues, Trends	3	July 6 - July 31
SPED	532	Survey of Special Education	3	June 8 - July 3
SPED	555	Char. Learning Disabilities	3	June 8 - July 31
SPED	630	Char. Behavioral and Emotional Disabilities	3	May 11 - July 3

Summer course listing is accurate as of Feb. 20, 2020.



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

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# A World of Change

With Spread of COVID-19, NSEA Leadership & Staff Work to Aid Members, Students

*“Chance favors the prepared mind.”*

Those words are attributed to French microbiologist and chemist Louis Pasteur (1822-1895), and perhaps have never been more appropriate than they are today, as the world deals with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The rapid pace of changes to the school year has been difficult on students and staff. Teaching and learning plans have been altered, statewide assessment has been halted, extra-curricular activities have stopped. Classes suspended for the spring semester may not reconvene.

All the other less-visible services that schools provide – breakfast and lunch, counseling, health care – have also been affected as schools from Omaha to Kearney to Scottsbluff shut down beginning in mid-March. Gov. Pete Ricketts and Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt urged every Nebraska school district to have a closure plan in place by March 20.

With all those factors in mind, NSEA leadership and staff are working hard to help educators be prepared. NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell had a word of advice for members, parents and others in the education family concerned about what might come. “Take a breath,” she said.

“Everyone is trying to make their best decisions, and circumstances are changing quickly,” said Fennell during a Facebook Live event on March 15. “What everyone has said repeatedly is that we will put the health and safety of our students and staff first. That is how decisions are being made.”

## ‘Be Patient’

The concern over the health and well-being of all involved in the public-school family was evident during that Facebook Live event. Fennell had announced plans for the broadcast late on Saturday evening. Ten days later, the event had been seen by 72,000 people. A second Facebook Live event on Wednesday, March 18, with Fennell and Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt had 31,000 views within just a few days.

Blomstedt reiterated the “take a breath” approach.

“I want everyone to be patient with one another, and don’t get

too worried about the initial phases of this,” he said. Blomstedt said however the school closures play out, the experience could have lasting effects.

“This is something that’s going to impact education not just this year, but maybe forever in Nebraska and across the country,”

he said.

During those Facebook Live events, questions asked by viewers ranged from pay for school district hourly staff, to IEPs, statewide assessments, student teacher work and more. As a service to members, these pages respond again to some of those questions.

NSEA is in constant contact with Blomstedt and other educational leaders in Nebraska and at NEA. Updated information will be passed along as fast and as often as possible.



**On Point:** NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell makes a point as she discusses the COVID-19 pandemic with Commissioner of Education Matt Blomstedt.

## ‘We Are the Pros’

As Fennell said, now is the time “to show our communities that we are

the professionals that we always are. They are looking to us for leadership.

“We’ve got scared parents, we’ve got scared kids. I know some of you are scared, too. But we’re going to rally and we’re going

to take adversity and we’re going to make it into opportunity and we’re going to show our communities how important their public school teachers are, and how important their parochial school teachers are and how important all teachers are.”

Finally, NSEA must be able to be in contact with members. It is imperative that NSEA has current and personal email address, as well as a mobile phone number so that mem-

bers can stay current during the ever changing conditions caused by the pandemic. You’ll find details on how to update your contact information on the next page. If you do not have a personal email account, consider Google’s Gmail program or Microsoft’s Hot-mail plan. Details on those plans are also enclosed. **Remember, you should not use your school email for personal business.**

Whatever you do during the next few weeks and months, practice safe social distancing, wash your hands, meet only in small groups and – if at all possible – keep in touch with your students. Encourage them and keep teaching them.

And whatever happens, call NSEA if you have a question! We are prepared to help you. Remember: 1-800-742-0047.

**Stay Up-to-Date**  
For the most current information  
on the COVID-19 pandemic  
and education in Nebraska, go to:  
[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)

# NSEA Partners with NCN for K-12 Classes

## News Channel Nebraska Airs Four Hours Daily; NSEA Handles Content

With schools across the state closed indefinitely by mid-March, NSEA has announced an offer of educational programming for elementary and secondary students available free to all Nebraska children.

Thanks to a partnership with News Channel Nebraska and the Lincoln Public Schools, with financial support from the National Education Association, the programming began on Monday, March 23.

NSEA President Jenni Benson said the partnership entails four hours of daily live programming to be made available through nearly every video and cable TV service, as well as online or via mobile app from Flood Communications News Channel Nebraska.

"Our 28,000 members care deeply about their students and want them to continue their learning during these school closures," said Benson. "We are pleased to partner with News Channel Nebraska and Lincoln Public Schools to make this educational programming available statewide."

All Nebraska schools are now closed due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"During this time of unprecedented challenge to maintain educational continuity for the students of our city and state, I am most appreciative of the leadership of NSEA to organize a delivery system that will reach many of our students," said Dr. Steve Joel, Lincoln Public Schools superintendent.

"We are working with our members to coordinate this educational programming," said Maddie Fennell, NSEA executive director. "From read-alouds to learning games to instructional lessons with teachers, we will work to support our students and their families as we navigate this pandemic together."

### Available On-Demand

The partnership provides educational programming for elementary students on air from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Programming for secondary students is on air from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday.

"And, because we know every family's schedule is different, all the live content our members create and provide will be captured and available for on-demand playback at any time," said Benson.

"The NSEA represents the teachers

who change lives everyday throughout Nebraska. During this difficult time, thanks to the NSEA, children can continue learning and their parents will see firsthand some of the magic that happens in our classrooms every day," said Andy Ruback, CEO Flood Communications/News Channel Nebraska.

There are multiple ways to watch this new educational programming. Families can live stream NCN at:

[www.newschannelnebraska.com](http://www.newschannelnebraska.com)

Families can also download the NCN app on any mobile device, or access the programming through their local cable provider, NCN on Amazon Fire, Apple TV, and Roku apps.

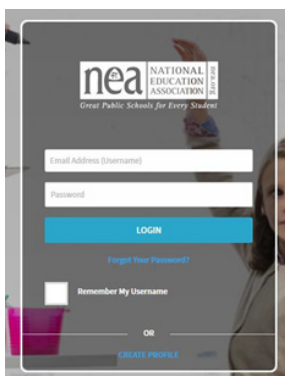
Those living in Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, Beatrice, Norfolk, Columbus and South Sioux City can also use an over-the-air antenna to access the live presentations. NCN will also share the programming with its 300,000 social followers.

The programs will also be available on-demand through NSEA's website at [nsea.org](http://nsea.org) and NSEA will provide an online forum for questions and supplemental educational resources.

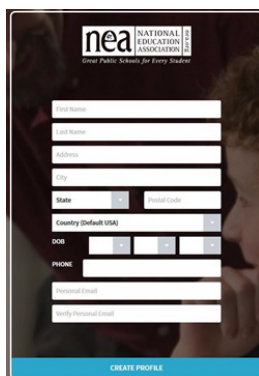
Educators can submit their name as a potential "TV teacher" at:

[www.nsea.org/volunteer](http://www.nsea.org/volunteer)

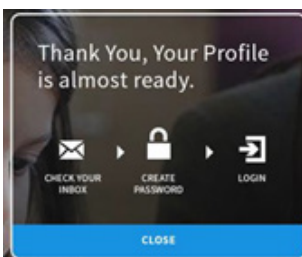
## UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION



- Go to [www.myNEA360.org](http://www.myNEA360.org)
- Click **CREATE PROFILE** (if you are new to edCommunities) or
- **LOGIN** (if you already have an edCommunities profile)

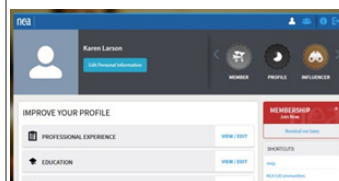


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**MyNEA360 Profile**



- Click Edit Personal Information to access your personal data
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- Quick links to resources
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If you experience technical difficulties with the myNEA360 website, you can send your updated information by email to [info@nsea.org](mailto:info@nsea.org) or call NSEA at (800) 742-0047.



# Frequently Asked Questions



## Will teachers be paid if schools are closed?

Yes. State law requires it: "In case of epidemic sickness prevailing to such an extent that the school or schools in any school district shall be closed, teachers shall be paid their usual salaries in full for such time as the school or schools shall be closed."

## Will teachers and students have to make up time in the summer?

Nebraska Commissioner of Education Dr. Matt Blomstedt said he will waive requirements for schools days for the year. The important thing is for schools to do their best to provide as much learning as possible.

## Who makes the call on whether teachers report to their building or not?

Your school district administrative team. If you are ill or immuno-compromised you should contact your building administrator to discuss alternatives to reporting.

## What about special education teachers with IEPs due?

IEP teams may, but are not required to, include distance learning plans in a child's IEP that could be triggered and implemented during a selective closure during a COVID-19 outbreak. This March 16 announcement from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) also addressed students who are absent due to illness or health vulnerability. Find details at the NDE website at [www.education.ne.gov](http://www.education.ne.gov) under the 'Resources for Schools' tab.

## Should I track the hours I work away from school?

Yes. An accurate, detailed count of those hours may come into play later. Also keep track of unusual circumstances and any administrative directives regarding work hours.

## What are the Educators Health Alliance and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska doing to meet the needs of plan participants during this pandemic?

The EHA – comprised of the NSEA, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Nebraska Association of School Boards – manages the health insurance program provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Testing for the coronavirus will be covered, with no cost share. Plan members will also have free access to the EHA's Telehealth program until further notice, with no cost share. In addition, restrictions around prescription refills have been eased. Find details at: [www.ehaplan.org](http://www.ehaplan.org)

## I am set to use my sick days for maternity leave the final five weeks of school. If schools close, will I still lose those days since the paperwork has long been filled out and submitted?

Contact your NSEA organizational specialist for advice. Such issues will likely have to be dealt with on a school-by-school and case-by-case basis.

## Who is my NSEA organizational specialist?

To find the organizational specialist assigned to your school district go to: [www.nsea.org/field-staff-units](http://www.nsea.org/field-staff-units) Reach your organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

## What about testing?

The Nebraska Department of Education has suspended the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS)

testing for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year.

## Will paraprofessionals, secretaries, cafeteria workers and bus drivers be paid?

This is up to each school district. Some school districts have passed resolutions to pay non-certificated employees while others are having them continue to work in various roles.

## How might this pandemic affect school employee retirement?

The Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System and the Omaha School Employees System have provided guidance on the possible affect of COVID-19 on school plan member retirements as follows:

The **Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System (NPERS)** has provided legal guidance on the possible impact of COVID-19 on school plan member retirements. That guidance is at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)

NPERS has determined that Neb. Rev. Stat. section 79-8,106 provides statutory leave for teachers.

If a teacher is paid regular wages during a period of school closure due to an epidemic, then for retirement purposes creditable service is earned, and the school district must report hours, compensation and contributions to NPERS. If administrators are rendering active services, then creditable service is also earned and similar information is reported to NPERS.

It is less clear regarding the impact to classified staff and hourly employees. This is because school districts are addressing classified staff in a variety of different ways. If an employee is not rendering service and receiving no compensation, the school should not report any hours, compensation or contributions. This reduction in creditable service and compensation could affect employees' retirement benefit in multiple ways. Please refer to the NPERS School Plan handbook by typing this address into your browser:

[bit.ly/npershandbook](http://bit.ly/npershandbook)

The Omaha School Employees Retirement System (OSERS) indicates it sees no impediment to processing monthly retirement payroll. OSERS staff can work remotely to access the necessary touch points to ensure the processing of monthly pension payroll. The Omaha Public Schools is working also to ensure payroll is not hindered in the event of a disruption.

If you have questions about your retirement, or if your plan to retire:

- Call the NPERS office at 402-471-2053 or 800-245-5712.
- Call the OSERS office at 531-299-0329.

## What does this mean for student teachers midway through their semester?

Teachers-to-be who are in their student teaching semester should work with their cooperating teacher and their college or university's supervising professor to make sure that the conditions of their student teaching program are met, if possible. Nebraska is a college referral state, so if your college/university believes you are qualified and have met your benchmarks, it may have the latitude to recommend you for certification.

## Will hourly employees be able to keep their health insurance if they end up not being paid during closure?

Again, that will be up to each school district's administration and school board. We hope and believe that school districts will do the right thing and maintain jobs and the benefits that go along with those jobs.

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\* For those interested in school-based mental health careers

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or apply online at [graduatestudies.unomaha.edu](http://graduatestudies.unomaha.edu).



# Reflect Now, Bargain Better

## Review the Bargaining Process Now, You'll Have a Head Start Next Fall

By Randy Gordon,  
NSEA Collective Bargaining Specialist

The relief that comes from completing bargaining for another year or two often leaves members of local association bargaining teams with unresolved issues as the ratification vote, board approval and signature event seemingly signal "the end." The events of the past few months melt away and good ideas and strategy considerations are forgotten until the next November 1 start date, if remembered, at all.

Unresolved issues around donated leave, compensation for dual-credit instruction and extra duty are likely to return. It can be helpful to review the proposals, comments and events that created those difficult situations. Among the more common issues:

### Dual-Credit Compensation

The topic of how much compensation instructors receive for teaching a dual-credit course arose in several locals both before and during negotiations. Many negotiators were unaware that such compensation existed or was negotiable. Historically, agreements have included compensation on a per student basis or a flat amount. Depending on the college, compensation per class varied, but in some cases included a minimum amount. For one teacher, the difference between what had been paid to the school district and what was required by the college was close to \$1,000 per semester course.

### Sick Bank, Donated Leave

Perhaps the most discussed topic each year during negotiations is the current sick bank language or the proposal of a new system. Sick banks have often been discouraged for a variety of reasons, but leave donation seems to be easier to implement and administer. The 2020 NSEA University bargaining program this July will include a presentation on this topic.

### Extra-Duty Schedules

While the creation of an extra-duty assignment is management prerogative, the compensation for extra duty is negotiable based on the nature and workload of the assignment. It's easy to add another basketball assistant and determine that their season and related duties are like that of other assistant basketball coaches. That compensation is much more difficult to determine for a new program or one with altered responsibilities. The well-intentioned district that adds a coaching position or sponsorship role without first consulting with the bargaining agent may create a disparate stipend that conflicts with the length of season or workload, something that is much more challeng-

ing and painful to fix, after the fact.

### Managing Proposals

Managing the exchange of proposals and related discussion is challenging even when both sides are using similar written formats and a proposal/counter-proposal process. Things get messy once proposal exchange moves from the table and hallway conversations, and when email and texting are allowed. Consider these situations:

■ **The team doesn't receive all the information.** If the administration or board negotiator shares with one person after school, the others on the team aren't privy to the information and documenting the information shared becomes challenging for your association team.

■ **The order of proposals gets clouded.** If the board requests your next proposal via email in advance of the next session, the reply is sometimes viewed as a rejection and may prompt different action on your team's part.

■ **It takes commitment to meet face to face.** In addition to using meeting time to build relationships and evaluate reactions in real time, face to face negotiations require that team members commit to the time and accept the added pressure of getting settled in a timely manner.

It's understandable when your team wants to walk away from the process, once settled, but there's significant value in clearly reflecting on the events of a bargaining season.

Documenting comments, unresolved topics and area trends helps prepare for the next bargaining season. Reviewing and understanding the board's interests helps to guide your team's research, as does reflecting on whether the settlement meets member needs. If your team is interested in reviewing the past negotiation process, contact your NSEA organizational specialist to set up a meeting and plan to attend the 2020 NSEA University for comparability study training on July 14 or 16, and a full day of bargaining content on July 15.

Reach your organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.



### Elect Robert Miller



**NSEA Vice President**

### Re-elect Linda Freye



**Nebraska  
NEA Director**



# True Confession: I Love People Watching



**Teacher**  
**Tom Whisinnand**

“

*Teachers all face situations involving students who haven't developed the social or emotional skills necessary to navigate their own lives, whether inside or outside the classroom.*

”

*Tom Whisinnand was the 2019 Sanford Teacher Award Grand Prize recipient. He is passionate about how social emotional skills are learned and practiced by students in classrooms as well as by adults in the world. He teaches fourth grade at Reagan Elementary in Millard Public Schools.*

## By Tom Whisinnand

The headline says it all. I absolutely, 100 percent, LOVE people watching!

I was sitting in an airport recently and could not help but watch people as they enjoyed their breakfast, then ran to catch their flight, dragging their families to their plane's gate.

If you want to observe just how well, or poorly, individuals handle stressful situations, I suggest watching people as they interact in an airport. It seems that many of the social norms people adhere to in their everyday lives seem to be suspended while in an airport. Some of the behaviors I witnessed made me want to take a few individuals back to my fourth grade classroom and reteach them some social emotional lessons.

This particular people watching session was extra interesting. I had just finished the book *Permission to Feel: Unlocking the Power of Emotions to Help Our Kids, Ourselves, and Our Society Thrive*, by Dr. Marc Brackett. He wrote extensively about becoming a “behavior scientist” noting that one activity that scientists routinely conduct is observation. As I sat there, I wasn't just a person in an airport people watching – I became a “behavior scientist!”

## Extenuating Circumstances

One of the more interesting behaviors I witnessed was an individual who became irate. This individual stood up from his table, stomped around the airport restaurant, swore a number of times, returned to his table and swore at his companion about how ridiculous it was that his order was so simple, yet it couldn't be delivered correctly. Eventually, the wait staff returned to his table. The angry individual then proceeded to tell the wait staff just how ridiculous it was that his order was simple, how it was it brought out incorrectly, and what an unbelievably long time it took to bring it out in the first place.

After making careful observations in my new role as a “behavior scientist” I continued the scientific process by hypothesizing what could have triggered this man to act in such an uncaring and

socially irresponsible way. The hypothesis that I came up with was that he probably had extenuating circumstances (he had limited sleep the night before; his flight was delayed; he was on his way to a high-stress family situation) that brought out the behavior he exhibited. While the behavior that I witnessed was inexcusable, I also wondered why this man felt that he could so openly take out his frustration on a totally undeserving wait staff.

After finishing breakfast and walking to my plane's gate, I began to reflect on the episode I had witnessed. I asked myself how I might have reacted had this behavior been directed at me, as a fourth grade teacher? I also wondered what might have happened had this behavior been demonstrated by a middle school or a high school student? What would my reaction be to a student who angrily got out of their desk and was clearly agitated? How would I react if I was cursed at? Would I assume the role of a “behavior scientist” and look for a deeper reason, or would I instinctively go directly to discipline mode to ensure the behavior was not going to happen again?

## A Critical Examination

Teachers all face situations involving students who haven't developed the social or emotional skills necessary to navigate their own lives, whether inside or outside the classroom. Not only do we need to become “social scientists” in order to discover what may be causing difficulty for our students (no food at home, abusive relationships, lack of sleep, etc), we must critically examine our emotional reactions to students who may be struggling to meet those social and emotional norms that are expected at school.

Do we react out of anger and punish a student because he interrupted us for the fifth time in a week, or do we remind him to adhere to our expectations and later, as a “social scientist,” reflect on why this student felt the need to ignore our expectations? As Alex Kajatani says in his book *Owning It, Proven Strategies to Ace and Embrace Teaching*, “Understanding a student's motivation is essential to successful conflict resolution...”

I can't wait to do more student observation in my classroom, as a “social scientist”! I will also strive to come to a deeper understanding of my students' behavior. Once I have a better understanding of my students' motivations and reasons for acting out, I will be better able to help support their social emotional needs.

# Forgivable Loans Offered for Teachers

## Maximum of \$3,000 Offered for Each of Five Years

Are you a Nebraska teacher enrolled in a graduate program? If so you may be eligible for a \$3000 forgivable loan.

The Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program (EETP) provides a limited number of forgivable loans to Nebraska teachers enrolled in an eligible graduate program at a Nebraska institution. Applications open April 1.

Eligible students may apply on an annual basis for funds of \$175 per credit hour, up to a maximum of \$3,000. Students can apply for EETP loans annually for up to five (5) consecutive years.

Eligible graduate coursework includes classes that begin during the period of July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021.

To be considered for an Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program forgivable loan, you must:

- Be employed as a certificated teacher in an approved or accredited

public or private PK-12 school in Nebraska;

- Be a resident Nebraska student.

Applicants must also be enrolled in an approved graduate program at an eligible Nebraska college or university, which meets one of the following categories:

- A graduate degree in a shortage area;

- A graduate program for an added Endorsement in a shortage area;

- A graduate degree in curriculum and instruction;

- A graduate degree in a subject area in which a teaching endorsement is already held, or;

- A graduate degree that will result in an additional endorsement not considered a shortage area which your school administrator believes will be beneficial to the students of the school.

The 2020-21 EETP application will be made available on the Nebraska Department of Education's EETP website by typing this link into your browser:

[bit.ly/nebraskaeetp](http://bit.ly/nebraskaeetp)

Again, the application will be posted at this site on Wednesday, April 1, 2020, at 9 a.m. CDT. It will be available through May 3, 2020.

Further, the EETP application web page with access to college or university contact information, application submission deadline and guidelines, and various programs of study went live in late March. For details, click on your college or university's name tab. The page will contain information that will be helpful prior to applying for the award.

On April 1 access to the application will be available. Candidates will download the application materials from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) website.

Remember that an individual must apply for the award each year that funding will be requested.

Only Nebraska institutions are eligible for this funding program. The application materials are sent to the institution, per the instructions on the website.

## DonorsChoose Offers Resources to Teachers

If you're one of the many teachers who use their own money for school supplies, DonorsChoose may just be the solution to your problem!

The nonprofit DonorsChoose connects teachers in need of classroom resources with donors who want to help.

Full-time classroom teachers at public schools who spend more than 75 percent of each workday with students may submit a project. Other public school full-timers, like nurses and guidance counselors are also eligible.

Visit DonorsChoose and select "Get started" to create an account. Once you've signed up, log in and submit a project. Create a project by selecting a vendor to start shopping and choose the items you need. Once a project has been created, you'll be asked to describe your project and how it will benefit students.

Volunteers will review the and post the project. Then, donors can visit the site and choose to help fund the project. If your project is funded, DonorsChoose orders and ships materials.

Horace Mann is committed to educators, and has been a national sponsor of DonorsChoose since 2010. To learn more, go to:

[horacemann.com/locator](http://horacemann.com/locator)

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You will learn the fundamentals of school counseling alongside up to 10-12 of your peers in a unique community centered learning cohort. All within a 24-month program design.

*Note: Students who do not hold a teaching certificate will need to take 12 additional credits for state endorsement.*

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**For more information:**

 402-375-7389

 [shreink1@wsc.edu](mailto:shreink1@wsc.edu)



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**Wayne State College offers master's degrees in education (MSE), along with endorsements or certifications that you can add to your existing degree. Our programs are affordable, convenient, and accredited.**

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The online master's degree in school administration is designed to prepare you for a career in an administrative position, such as principal, director, department head, or supervisor, and includes an extra focus area in athletic administration. If you already have an MSE, you may be eligible to add this as an endorsement to your existing degree.

### **Master of Science in Education: Special Education (Online)**

Our newest online program, the master's degree in special education is designed to help professionals and districts meet the needs of students with exceptionalities and their families. This program also offers options for those with a bachelor's degree to earn certification or add an endorsement to their existing degree.

**Special Education for Initial Certification:** For those who already have bachelor's degrees and are interested in a teaching career as a special education professional.

**Special Education for Additional Certification:** For certified teachers who want to learn how to bring special education-related teaching and assessment methods into the classroom, or for those interested in becoming special education teachers.

**Special Education Advanced Study:** For special education professionals looking to deepen and broaden their understanding of the special education field.

**Special Education Supervisor:** For special education professionals looking to transition into leadership roles.

### **Reading Specialist (PK-12) (Online)**

This online reading endorsement can be added to your existing bachelor's or master's degree, or you can apply the credit toward earning a master's degree.

## **MSE Community of Learning (hybrid, one Saturday per month and online)**

Take your teaching to the next level through this unique, community-focused program. Spend five Saturdays per semester collaborating and learning with others while driving your own professional development to directly impact your students.

**Two-year cohorts starting this fall in Fremont, Norfolk, and South Sioux City.**

**Attend an Open House via Zoom: April 9, 15, and 21 - Visit: [www.wsc.edu/community](http://www.wsc.edu/community) for more information.**

*Fall and Summer enrollment starts March 30, 2020.*

**Apply today!**



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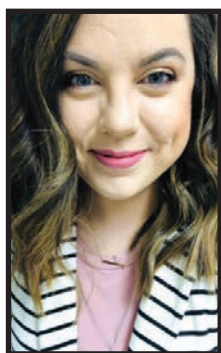
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# Restorative Practices on Tap for April Webinar

## NSEA's Monthly Session Will Review Practices Used in Schools

Helping students learn from mistakes and fostering a positive school climate can go a long way toward improving learning in any classroom or school.



Callahan

NSEA members will have an opportunity to learn more about restorative justice practices that can lead to such improvements during the Association's monthly webinar series on Thursday, April 9.

The April session is the eighth and final in a series of professional development webinars NSEA has hosted during the current school year. The session will be led by Caitlin Callahan, a kindergarten teacher at Eagle Elementary School in the Waverly Public School District and a member of the Waverly Education Association.

Among the learning outcomes expected for participants are:

- Development of a deeper un-

derstanding of why restorative justice practices are used in schools.

- Development of classroom expectations that encourage interpersonal skills.

- Development of strategies for conflict resolution that focus on restoring relationships and repairing harm.

Callahan's expertise comes from implementing these programs in her own classroom and her work on a master's degree in counseling.

The April webinar will begin at 6:30 p.m., CDST.

### Open to All

Any NSEA member interested may participate in the webinar program, which uses the Zoom platform. Members must register for the webinar at this link:

[www.nsea.org/webinars](http://www.nsea.org/webinars)

These professional development offerings are a component of the Association's plan to provide professional growth to members. Utilizing the Zoom platform lets NSEA reach teachers across the state, wherever they are most comfortable learning.

For more details, contact NSEA Teaching and Learning Specialist Dr. Cindy Copich at 1-800-742-0047, or reach her at:



## WEBINAR SERIES

REGISTER ONLINE AT:  
[WWW.NSEA.ORG/WEBINARS](http://WWW.NSEA.ORG/WEBINARS)

[cindy.copich@nsea.org](mailto:cindy.copich@nsea.org)

For those who may wish to check out recordings of past webinars, note that a portion of those past sessions are available at the webinar registration page listed above, along with many other resources.

Past sessions available on the website include:

- Getting a Good Start: Setting Clear Expectations, Classroom Procedures & Routines.

- Building a Positive Learning Environment.

- The Importance of Social-Emotional Learning.

- Building Student Accountability: An Alternative to Punishment.

- Preventing Burnout: How Can We Support the Emotional Well-Being of Teachers?

- Trauma-Informed Classrooms.

# Free Training Supports Students with Epilepsy

## Seizure Type, Seizure First Aid Among Topics Offered by Epilepsy Foundation of Nebraska

The Epilepsy Foundation Nebraska now has available a program designed to provide school personnel with information on seizure types, seizure first aid and social and academic support for students living with seizures and epilepsy.

Epilepsy affects 33,000 people in Nebraska and is more prevalent than most people realize. One in 26 people will be diagnosed with epilepsy in their lifetime – approximately one student in every classroom. Not all seizures look alike and knowing how to recognize and respond when someone has a seizure can be lifesaving.

Seizure Training for School Personnel is a free program available online or in person and instructs attendees how to

care for and support students with epilepsy, said Kristi Berst, executive director of the Epilepsy Foundation Nebraska.

The training is appropriate for teachers, guidance counselors, librarians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, aides, administrators and IEP/504 plan team members, among others. Epilepsy can affect anyone with a brain, and anyone with a brain can positively affect epilepsy.

Berst said the Center for Disease Control and Prevention is authorized by the IACET to offer 0.1 continuing education units for the program. Further, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is a pre-approved provider of Certified in Public Health recertification credits and is authorized to offer 1.0 CPH recertification credits for the program.

For more information, to schedule a training, or access the free online training please contact Epilepsy Foundation Nebraska at [nebraska@efa.org](mailto:nebraska@efa.org) or by calling (402) 715-9416.

# Socially Distance by Voting Early!

## Vote from Home, Mail in Your Ballot to Maintain Healthy Distancing

Here is a great way to practice good ‘social distancing’ during Nebraska’s May 12 Primary Election: cast your ballot early!

There is good reason to do so:

- there are plenty of great candidates to research and learn about — perhaps as a family activity! — before you cast your ballot and mail it to your local election commissioner;

- there are 10 initiative petition issues and constitutional amendment petitions being circulated, as well as three constitutional amendments proposed by the Nebraska Legislature. While those will not be on the May 12 ballot, they will be considered in November, and registering to vote early and by mail now should get you on your local election commissioner’s ballot mailing list for the November election.

- the back side of this page is the form you can use to request a mail-in ballot. Complete the form, tear it out, **find the address of your local election commissioner below** and mail the request. You’ll receive your ballot, with instructions in plenty of time to complete your selections and return the ballot to your county election office. (You can

also find the form on the website of the Nebraska Secretary of State.

Note that you can also register to vote at the Secretary of State’s website, if you have not already done so.

According to the information on the Nebraska Secretary of State’s website, ballots will begin to be distributed for early voters as early as April 6.

If you prefer technology over the U.S. Mail, you can fill out the form on the next page, take a picture or scan the request and email it directly to your county election official. To find your county election official’s contact information, find the ‘county election official’ link on the Secretary of State’s website at:

**[sos.nebraska.gov/elections/2020-elections](https://sos.nebraska.gov/elections/2020-elections)**

You may also vote early in your county election offices, provided your county offices are not closed due to the pandemic. Here are key election dates:

- April 6: Early voting ballots begin to be mailed out.
- April 13: Early voting in county offices begin.
- May 1: Last day to request a ballot to be mailed to you.
- May 11: Last day to vote early in your county election office.
- May 12: Primary Election Day.

For more answers to your Election Day questions, go to the Secretary of State’s website listed above.

Adams/500 W 4th St., Ste. 109 Hastings/68901	Antelope/501 Main St., PO Box 26 Neligh/68756	Arthur/205 Fir St., PO Box 126 Arthur/69121	Banner/PO Box 67 Harrisburg/69345	Blaine/145 Lincoln Ave. Brewster/68821	Boone/222 S. 4th St. Albion/68620
Box Butte/PO Box 678 Alliance/69301	Boyd/401 Thayer, PO Box 26 Butte/68722	Brown/148 W. 4th St. Ainsworth/69210	Buffalo/1512 Central Ave., PO Box 1270 Kearney/68848	Burt/111 N. 13th St., Ste. 8, PO Box 87 Tekamah/68061	Butler/451 N 5th St. David City/68632
Cass/201 Main Street Plattsmouth/68048	Cedar/101 S Broadway, PO Box 47 Hartington/68739	Chase/921 Broadway St., PO Box 1299 Imperial/69033	Cherry/365 N Main St., PO Box 120 Valentine/69201	Cheyenne/1000 10th Ave., PO Box 217 Sidney/69162	Clay/111 W Fairfield St. Clay Center/68933
Colfax/411 E. 11th St. Schuyler/68661	Cuming/200 S. Lincoln St., Room 100 West Point/68788	Custer/431 S. 10th St. Broken Bow/68822	Dakota/1601 Broadway St., PO Box 39 Dakota City/68731	Dawes/451 Main Chadron/69337	Dawson/700 N. Washington, Room A Lexington/68850
Deuel/718 Third St., PO Box 327 Chappell/69129	Dixon/302 W 3rd St., PO Box 546 Ponca/68770	Dodge/435 N. Park, Rm. 102 Fremont/68025	Douglas/12220 W Center Rd Omaha/68144	Dundy/112 7th Ave. West, PO Box 506 Benkelman/69021	Fillmore/900 G St., PO Box 307 Geneva/68361
Franklin/405 15th St., PO Box 146 Franklin/68939	Frontier/PO Box 40 Stockville/69042	Furnas/912 R St., PO Box 387 Beaver City/68926	Gage/612 Grant St., PO Box 429 Beatrice/68310	Garden/611 Main St., PO Box 350 Oshkosh/69154	Garfield/250 S. 8th Ave., PO Box 218 Burwell/68823
Gosper/507 Smith St., PO Box 136 Elwood/68937	Grant/105 E Harrison, PO Box 139 Hyannis/69350	Greeley/101 S Kildare St., PO Box 287 Greeley/68842	Hall/121 South Pine, Ste. 8 Grand Island/68801	Hamilton/1111 13th St., Ste. 1 Aurora/68818	Harlan/706 West 2nd St., PO Box 698 Alma/68920
Hayes/505 Troth, PO Box 370 Hayes Center/69032	Hitchcock/229 East D Street Trenton/69044	Holt/204 N 4th Street, PO Box 329 O’Neill/68763	Hooker/303 NW 1st St., PO Box 184 Mullen/69152	Howard/612 Indian St., PO Box 25 St. Paul/68873	Jefferson/411 Fourth Street Fairbury/68352
Johnson/351 Broadway, PO Box 416 Tecumseh/68450	Kearney/424 N Colorado Ave., PO Box 339 Minden/68959	Keith/511 N. Spruce, Suite 102 Ogallala/69153	Keya Paha/310 Courthouse Dr, PO Box 349 Springview/68778	Kimball/114 E Third St., Ste. 6 Kimball/69145	Knox/206 Main St., PO Box 166 Center/68724
Lancaster/601 N 46th Street Lincoln/68503	Lincoln/301 N Jeffers Street, Rm. 101 North Platte/69101	Logan/317 Main St., PO Box 8 Stapleton/69163	Loup/408 4th St., PO Box 187 Taylor/68879	Madison/1313 N Main St., PO Box 290 Madison/68748	McPherson/500 Anderson, PO Box 122 Tryon/69167
Merrick/1510 18th St., PO Box 27 Central City/68826	Morrill/606 L St., PO Box 610 Bridgeport/69336	Nance/209 Esther St., PO Box 338 Fullerton/68638	Nemaha/1824 N Street, Ste. 201 Auburn/68305	Nuckolls/150 S Main St., PO Box 366 Nelson/68961	Otoe/1021 Central Ave, Rm. 103 Nebraska City/68410
Pawnee/625 6th St., PO Box 431 Pawnee City/68420	Perkins/200 Lincoln Ave., PO Box 156 Grant/69140	Phelps/715 5th Ave., PO Box 404 Holdrege/68949	Pierce/111 W Court St., Rm. 1 Pierce/68767	Platte/2610 14th St. Columbus/68601	Polk/400 Hawkeye St., PO Box 267 Osceola/68651
Red Willow/502 Norris Ave. McCook/69001	Richardson/1700 Stone St., Rm. 203 Falls City/68355	Rock/400 S State St., PO Box 367 Bassett/68714	Saline/204 S. High Street, PO Box 865 Wilber/68465	Sarpy/501 Olson Dr., Suite 4 Papillion/68046	Saunders/433 N Chestnut St., Ste. 300, PO Box 61 Wahoo/68066
Scotts Bluff/1825 10th Street Gering/69341	Seward/529 Seward St., PO Box 190 Seward/68434	Sheridan/301 E 2nd St., PO Box 39 Rushville/69360	Sherman/630 O St., PO Box 456 Loup City/68853	Sioux/325 Main St., PO Box 158 Harrison/69346	Stanton/804 Ivy St., PO Box 347 Stanton/68779
Thayer/225 N. Fourth St., Room 201 Hebron/68370	Thomas/503 Main St., PO Box 226 Thedford/69166	Thurston/106 S 5th St., PO Box 159 Pender/68047	Valley/125 S. 15th Street Ord/68862	Washington/1555 Colfax St., PO Box 466 Blair/68008	Wayne/510 Pearl St., Ste. 5 Wayne/68787-1939





# Nebraska Early Voting Ballot Application

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Return completed application to:

\_\_\_\_\_ County Election Office

\_\_\_\_\_, NE \_\_\_\_\_

I, the undersigned, declare that I am a registered voter in Nebraska. I am registered at the following address:

\_\_\_\_\_, in \_\_\_\_\_ County.

I am requesting early voting ballots for the following Election: Primary\* ☐ General ☐ Special ☐

(Note: The first day to request an early voting ballot is 120 days before an election)

to be held on \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

☐ I request to vote in the Election Office today as the Early Voting Polling Place.

☐ I request that ballots be mailed to me, (or to the person I am acting as agent for), at the following address:

Address Line 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Address Line 2: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I request to take the ballots with me, (or to the person I am acting as agent for, up to two people).

To confirm any information prior to sending the ballots, the Election Office may reach me at:

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Voter's Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Voter's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Voter's Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY) \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

If applying for another voter: Agent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

**The penalty for election falsification is imprisonment for up to two years imprisonment and twelve months post-release supervision, a fine of up to ten thousand dollars, or both.**

**\*For Nonpartisans ONLY:** If you wish to vote in this **PRIMARY** election for U.S. Senator and/or U.S. House of Representative, you may request a partisan ballot as stated in §32-912 (2) from one of the political parties by checking the appropriate box. In addition, the Democratic Party and the Libertarian Party have opened their primaries to allow nonpartisan voters to vote in either all Democratic or all Libertarian contests.

Democratic ☐

Libertarian ☐

Republican ☐

## Election Office Use Only

Application Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Sent: \_\_\_\_\_

Voter ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Ballot Assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Staff initials: \_\_\_\_\_

# NSEA University Still Scheduled for July

## Keynote Dates Firmed Up; Registration Opens Soon

The show will go on.

As of the last week in March, you could quote that old show business maxim when talking about NSEA University, scheduled for July 14-16 in Lincoln.

“Planning continues, and we are confident and hopeful that our second NSEA University will be as or more successful than our first,” said NSEA President Jenni Benson.

By late March, with the COVID-19 pandemic spreading quickly, and with schools across the state closed, planners were optimistic that conditions would be better in four months.

Three keynote speakers have been secured and scores of breakout sessions have been scheduled for the event at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Innovation Campus.

Keynotes and the date of their schedule appearances are:

■ **Rodney Robinson**, Tuesday, July 14. Robinson, the 2020 U.S. Teacher of the Year, began his career in middle and high schools in Richmond, VA, and now teaches in a juvenile detention center.

■ **Dr. JoAnne Owens-Nauslar**, Wednesday, July 15.

A Lincoln resident, Owens-Nauslar is considered one of the nation’s most vocal personalities on the issues of physical activity and the need for physical education. She has been described as “past president of nearly everything,” which includes the National Association for Sport and Physical Education; the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education,



**Dintersmith**



**Owens-Nauslar**



**Robinson**

Recreation, and Dance; and The Husker Athletic Fund.

■ **Ted Dintersmith**, Thursday, July 16. Dintersmith spent two decades in venture capital, including four years as the Business 2.0’s top-performing U.S. venture capitalist. Today, he is one of America’s leading advocates for education policies that foster creativity, innovation, motivation and purpose.

They will also contribute sessions as part of more than 150 professional development sessions during that week. The goal of NSEA U is to provide professional development that will improve the skills of Nebraska educators.

The event will feature tracks for Leadership Institute invitees, for early-in-their-career educators, as well as members of any

kind. Other tracks will offer topics under the five provisions of NSEA’s strategic plan: bargaining, membership, politics, governance and social justice.

More details and registration — open in early April — will be available in the May edition of *The Voice*, and at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)

## Still Seeking NSEA U Proposals

Your Association will have as many as 150 professional development sessions on the agenda when the three-day NSEA University convenes on July 14.

Planners for both events are still seeking presenters to fill open session times and dates.

If you have a proposal for a professional development session that would be useful to your Association colleagues, please fill out the Request for Proposal form as soon as possible. It can be found at:

[www.nsea.org/PDRFP](http://www.nsea.org/PDRFP)

## A Teaching Challenge: Climate Change

Global warming, climate change — whatever you wish to call it — has received much attention in recent years.

Teaching about climate change can be a challenge — but educators should first know that the topic is no longer of interest to just a few scientists. Insurance companies, emergency responders, the military and more are now concerned about climate change. Students can take an active role by learning about it today, and perhaps choosing a field in which they tackle climate change.

Educators are vital in that learning process, and NEA has produced some useful information about teaching climate change.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), students should understand:

■ The effects of human-caused climate

change can already be seen, for example in the melting polar ice caps. More consequences are expected, including the extinction of certain species and loss of forests.

■ Some of our infrastructure is in danger, such as the extra burden placed on the energy grid from high temperatures.

■ How the climate and precipitation patterns change can threaten agriculture.

NOAA says it helps to bring the lesson close to home. For middle students, NOAA suggests talking about the effects of climate on animal habitats. High school students can use geography to study sea level or biology to study how species adapt.

Go here for climate change information:

[nea.org/home/65564.htm](http://nea.org/home/65564.htm)

Learn more about composting here:

[epa.gov/recycle/composting-home](http://epa.gov/recycle/composting-home)

## Elect Jordan Koch



**NSEA Vice President**  
[facebook.com/koch4vp](https://facebook.com/koch4vp)



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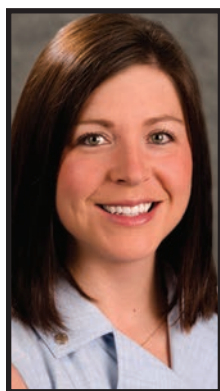
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# Closed Means Closed

## Meanwhile, Teachers Teaching, Student Learning Will Not Stop



**2020 Nebraska  
Teacher  
of the Year  
Megan Helberg**

“

*Districts need  
to recognize the  
effort teachers  
have been  
putting into this  
new reality,  
and protect their  
employees, as  
they have done  
for their students.*

”

**By Megan Helberg,  
Nebraska's 2020 Teacher of the Year  
Burwell Education Association Member**

Last Tuesday, March 17, the decision was made to temporarily close my school. When I shut the lid on my laptop and packed my bag to go home, a wave of emotions washed over me. It caught me off guard, to be honest. The tears flowed as I sat in my empty classroom and walked into the eerily quiet hallway. It was in that moment I realized that while I am passionate about teaching, I love my students and colleagues more.

As teachers, we desperately want to teach. It's our jam. It's our thing. But COVID-19 is here and it is serious. Our Number One priority right now must be to keep each other safe and alive. Plain and simple. I want to see all my students and colleagues when our school opens its doors again, and that means we need to be proactive.

Once our students and staff are home in a secluded environment, teachers can get back to teaching: online, through phone calls, take-home packets, etc. Most teachers are already neck-deep in that process; doing what is best for our students. We want to teach. It is what we love. It is what we crave. It is in our hearts and souls to help our students.

### **A Very Real Concern**

Unfortunately, teachers in several rural Nebraska school districts are being required by their school superintendents and school boards to report to their “closed” school buildings “to put in the hours.” Believe me, we are putting in our hours – and more. We always do. It's just the nature of teaching.

If your school has shut its doors for the health and safety of its students and greater community, we need to extend the same consideration to teachers. School administration must trust and assist their staff as they continue teaching and make it work from home. I've heard from several teachers across the state and, while they are not panicked, they are very concerned about continuing to risk their health by reporting to their classroom.

I am reassured that many school administrators have stepped up to the plate: they understand

that if we are going to seriously combat this pandemic, we need to allow teachers to work from the safety of their own homes. It makes sense – and we will make it work. School administrators, more than anyone, should know the teachers they hire are passionate and professional.

### **‘What is the Intent?’**

For those superintendents and school boards who have chosen to require their employees to report each day, I respectfully ask: What is your intent with this? Have you considered the impact of those decisions on the families of your employees, who now have children at home? What messages are you sending to teachers when you don't seem to trust them to love and connect with students without your direct, physical supervision? What compromises can be made? And most importantly: Have you considered how you will respond if one of your employees tests positive, and you had been requiring that person to report to work – to touch door handles, use restrooms, push copy machine buttons?

I believe in teachable moments, and COVID-19 has been providing them hand-over-fist to educators across this country. Teachers are learning new and creative ways to stay in touch and connect with our students. Districts need to recognize the effort teachers have been putting into this new reality, and protect their employees, as they have done for their students.

### **Peace of Mind**

As teachers, we model our educational lessons for our students. Right now, people are being told to stay home. I hope school administrators are listening and will allow and trust their teachers to model this behavior during this surreal time.

Once we have peace of mind that our students and staff are home and safe, then watch out world, it's on! You bet your bottom dollar we are ready to roll out those engaging, meaningful, and practical lessons to educate our students.

*Megan Helberg began her teaching career at Papillion-LaVista and has taught English at Burwell Junior-Senior High School since 2010. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Chadron State College, attended the University of Nebraska at Kearney and earned a teaching certificate through the Transition to Teach program.*

# No Ukuleles, No Ice Cream, No Conference

## Covid 19 Precautions Cancel Spring Confab for NSEA-Retired

There will be no ukulele music and no ice cream at the NSEA-Retired Spring Conference in Lincoln on Thursday, April 23.

That's because the conference has been cancelled.

The agenda was set, and included an appearance by the Lincoln Ukulele Players, followed by an ice cream social. But concerns about the effects of the growing Coronavirus (Covid 19) pandemic made the decision to cancel the conference an easy call.

"Unfortunately, and with much regret, the conference has been cancelled," said NSEA-Retired President De Tonack.

The virus is particularly lethal to those over 60, more so for those over 60 with any kind of underlying health issues.

"We do not want to risk the health and well-being of any of our members," said Tonack.

Tonack hopes to have the breakout topics re-scheduled for a future conference, and said she would work to provide snippets of information from the presenters in future NSEA-Retired publications. Those sessions included these now canceled topics:

- How to Improve Your Sleep, covered by Ann Heydt, an outreach worker for the Aging Partners Health Program.

- Alicia Jones, director of the Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIP) through the Nebraska Department of Insurance, was to discuss Medicare deci-



**Bag of Goodies:** York Middle School teacher Ari Lovin displays the gift bag of goodies she received from York retiree Pat Carpenter.

sions and directions.

- Yoga instructor Sheila Palmquist was to present the Take 5 Program, a mindfulness-based program that helps children learn techniques to self-regulate behavior and emotions.

- Speed Traveling Through Four Countries, presented by four Lincoln Education Association-Retired members who are "well-traveled."

- Nebraska Loves Public Schools session on The Mind Inside film series.

The Lincoln Ukulele Players were to perform and tell stories in the afternoon.

If there are questions, contact Rebecca

Smith at 1-800-742-0047, or at:

[rebecca.smith@nsea.org](mailto:rebecca.smith@nsea.org)

### Gift Basket Greetings

Retired member Pat Carpenter of York has a great way to welcome teachers new to the profession or new to the community: she greets them with a gift basket (see photo).

Retired members in Lincoln, Omaha and the Platte Valley area are conducting similar projects this year with donated items and grant money from NSEA-Retired.

If you or your local retired association are interested in making a similar connection with new educators, contact NSEA-Retired President De Tonack at:

[dtonack@neb.rr.com](mailto:dtonack@neb.rr.com)

### Retirement Details from NPERS

If you are interested in learning more about your retirement plan benefits, and are thinking about retiring soon, the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems (NPERS) website has a great tool for you.

The benefits estimator on the NPERS website will allow you to explore different options for retirement benefits.

To learn more, go to the NPERS website and select the Plan Info/School Plan link on the left side of the home page. Then select the 'Benefit Estimator' at the top of the next page. The NPERS website is at:

[npers.ne.gov](http://npers.ne.gov)

— De Tonack,

NSEA-Retired President



**Pencils of Value:** NSEA-Retired provides the Dr. Seuss pencils, and the retired brother-sister missionary team of John Niemoth and Mary Ann Niemoth provide transportation and delivery. The Niemoths traveled to Kryrasa Primary School in the Sawe Village area of Tanzania in January and again presented students with the pencils — a valuable commodity for these children.



# Hastings Fetes Admins in Face of COVID-19

## Tri-City Area Member's Leave Restored with Assistance from NSEA

**Hastings Education Association President Deb Lyons** was at her school district's central office on Monday, March 16, — the first day of the week that a wave of school closings began sweeping across Nebraska as result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After she left the office, she had a great idea: a small gift to thank district administrative staff for all their hard work in the face of the unknown. It was a kind and thoughtful gesture as teachers, parents and students all leaned on administrators for guidance in facing the unknown.

"Things were changing so fast that before an email could be sent to staff things had already changed again," she said. "So Tuesday morning I talked to our HEA treasurer and vice president and we decided to do candy bars and gift cards. We quickly put baggies together and went to central office in time for the administrative meeting."

Everyone that works at central office, including assistants, and all of the administrators from the different buildings were allowed to choose a \$10 gift card from either Runza or Casey's in a baggie with a candy bar, a roll of Lifesavers and a short thank you note.

"We received lots of thanks from the admin team right then and today I have received several emails to thank the HEA for thinking of the administrators," said Lyons.

In March, **NSEA Organizational Specialist Kristen Sedlacek** worked with an NSEA member in the Tri-City Field

Staff Unit to restore special leave in a COVID-19-related case.

The member's spouse works at a manufacturing plant that was visited by a contractor from Japan several weeks earlier. A week after the visit, the spouse began exhibiting symptoms of illness. The family doctor sent the spouse to the hospital for COVID-19 testing. There, the spouse was told to self-quarantine.

The teacher voluntarily self-quarantined and took two sick leave days. On March 11, the spouse's test came back as negative and the teacher returned to work.

The teacher was hoping to save her leave days for maternity leave, but her building administrator said she would have to take sick leave. The local Association building representative mentioned the issue in a meeting, and Sedlacek reached out to the teacher.

Shortly after, the school district released information that the district — starting

on March 16, a week after the teacher took leave — would provide "special leave" for anyone with COVID-19-related issues. Sedlacek contacted the district's human resources director, who asked that the teacher email him with specifics and the doctor's note indicating she should quarantine.

With that information in hand, the HR director took the request to the district's Executive Committee. That body quickly approved the teacher's leave days retroactively, saving her two valuable days for maternity leave sometime down the road.

In response to the restoration of sick leave, the teacher told Sedlacek, "This means a lot! It means my husband and I can continue our infertility journey and not worry about two days lost. I'm thankful the (COVID-19) tests were negative but I'm glad I have my leave days to continue our dreams for a family."



**A Sweet Gift:** Hastings Education Association President Deb Lyons, left, and Vice President Jadee Bartunek, right, offer a gift card and bag of sweets to Alcott Elementary School Principal Charla Brant. The gifts from HEA to Hastings administrators was a 'thank you' for work done in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Successful Just One Drive Gains 170 New Members

More than 30 local associations gained membership during NSEA's Just One campaign in January and February.

All told, your Association membership grew by 170 members statewide during the drive — and Millard Education Association member Amanda Gehrke won a smart watch in a drawing from the names of those members who signed up a colleague.

"The value of membership cannot be overstated," said NSEA President Jenni Benson. "For individuals, there is great value in belonging to the professional education association. Collectively, there is great value in the growing number of association members."

The Just One campaign encourages association members to ask "just one" non-member to join the association. Local associations that signed up two or more new members receive a \$50 check for their association treasury. Twenty-seven locals qualified for the \$50 check.

The locals and the number of members signed during the campaign:

Omaha: 30.  
Millard: 20  
Lincoln: 13  
North Platte: 11  
Papillion-LaVista: 7  
Grand Island: 6  
Statewide Higher Ed: 6  
Norfolk: 4  
Westside: 4  
Ainsworth: 3  
Columbus: 3  
Elkhorn: 3  
Metro Comm. College: 3  
State Code Agency: 3  
South Sioux City: 3

Alliance: 2  
Bellevue: 2  
Cent. Comm College: 2  
Chase County: 2  
Holdrege: 2  
Holdrege ESPs: 2  
Lexington: 2  
Niobrara: 2  
Ralston: 2  
Raymond Central: 2  
Waverly: 2  
Wood River: 2  
Allen: 1  
Amherst: 1  
Arapahoe: 1  
Ashland-Greenwood: 1  
Axtell: 1  
Banner County: 1  
Diller-Odell: 1

ESU No. 3: 1  
Fairbury: 1  
Fremont: 1  
Gering: 1  
Grand Island NW: 1  
Hastings: 1  
Leyton: 1  
Logan View: 1  
North Platte paras: 1  
Ogallala: 1  
Omaha Administrators: 1  
Palmer: 1  
Scottsbluff: 1  
Seward: 1  
Shelby-Rising City: 1  
State College Chadron: 1  
State College Peru: 1  
State College Wayne: 1  
Wilcox-Hildreth: 1



## Speaking of Education

“We ask them (teachers) to do what we’d never ask anyone else in society to do — and for next to nothing. I can’t imagine being a first-grade teacher with a class of 35 children. And numbers are only one factor. you have to add in home life, apathetic parents, peer pressure, poverty, drugs. The challenge is to ensure that every child has real hope and is prepared for meaningful opportunity.”

— **Alan Page, NFL Hall of Fame football player and former Associate Justice, Minnesota Supreme Court 1945** —

## Tri-State Summit Brings Nebraska, Iowa, SD Together

More than 100 Association members, along with Association staff and volunteers, gathered at the Tri-State Summit: Creating Thriving Learning Environments for ALL Students, in Sioux City, IA, last month to talk about how to help children meet the challenges they face in today’s schools.

The conference provided an opportunity for members from three state affiliates to hone teaching skills and to learn from one another. Attending were NSEA members and members of the Iowa State Education Association and the South Dakota Education Association.

It also provided an avenue for Nebraska teachers to highlight the positive work they are doing in the area of social justice through presentations on Just Schools and Challenging Racism.

NSEA Vice President Paul Schulte, Millard, was in attendance.

“We’re really focused on what’s impacting our students, whether it’s racial, social justice issues, whether we are dealing with trauma-informed or trauma-sensitive classrooms, the baggage that they’re bringing into the classroom and how we can work with those students to



**On Duty:** NSEA Vice President Paul Schulte, right, was on duty at the Tri-State Education Summit in Sioux City, IA, last month. More than 100 Association members from three states attended sessions to improve teaching skills.

best educate them across the district and across the states,” said Schulte.

Presenters at the conference included Norfolk City Education Association President Kimberly Erickson and Rachel Palmer, president of the Winnebago Education Association.

Through a grant from NSEA-Retired, 36 educators received trauma-informed books and another 45 educators received ASCD resources on restorative practices and trauma-informed classrooms.

All attendees were also able to earn

one hour of graduate credit by attending the conference and participating in upcoming extended learning experiences.

Assisting were NSEA Organizational Specialists Carol Hicks, Mike Wiesen, Cindy Copich and Field and Special Projects Manager Michelle Raphael.

“This was a great opportunity to collaborate with surrounding state affiliates, and another great example of the professional development provided by NSEA,” said NSEA President Jenni Benson.

## Free Virtual Literature Circles

Jennifer Hunt, an educator from Arizona:

“My students have been using a variety of free technology tools for work on their virtual literature circles. We set up our main website on Wikispaces, and the literature circle wiki can be found at [wandawiki.wikispaces.com](http://wandawiki.wikispaces.com). Students not only created and collaborated on their wikis, but they used free technology tools to embed multimedia elements in their wikis:

- VoiceThread to create narrated slide shows,
- Wordle to create word clouds,
- Morgue File and the Library of Congress: American Mem-

ory to find copyright-free images suitable for the presentations, and

■ EasyBib to create bibliographies and citations for the information and images not of their own creation.

“We had a lot of fun creating our wikis, but we also worked very hard and learned some things the hard way as we went along. We’re very proud of our published wikis and like to encourage others to visit and leave comments on the discussion pages.”

**Sign up for Works4Me messages at:**  
[nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html](http://nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html)

