

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • April 2021

NEVER AGAIN

Malicious video leads teacher to speak out against secret recordings



Also inside:

- Educators Vaccinated
- American Rescue Plan Supports Schools
- Delegate Assembly Details

THE VOICE

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**A Great Public School
for Every Child.**

Thanks to the American Rescue Plan
Nebraska will receive
\$775,900,000
for public K-12 & higher ed schools

American Rescue Plan Act will support public schools

The U.S. Senate on March 6 and the House on March 10 passed the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, an economic impact package to speed recovery from the health and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Act represents the single largest investment ever in public education. It provides more than \$170.3 billion for K-12 schools, higher education and related programs under the U.S. Department of Education, including \$122.8 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Education Relief Fund, with no less than 90 percent delivered through Title I.

The law also prioritizes addressing students' disrupted learning, among other new priorities, by requiring local education agencies to reserve no less than 20 percent of their funds to address disrupted learning, and state education agencies must reserve:

- no less than 5 percent to address disrupted learning;
- no less than 1 percent for summer enrichment programs;
- no less than 1 percent for comprehensive afterschool programs; and
- not more than 0.5 for administrative costs.

For colleges and universities, it

provides the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, which provides nearly \$40 billion in grants to institutions of higher education. These funds will be distributed in the following manner:

■ 7.5 percent is specifically dedicated for Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Minority-Serving Institutions, and other under-resourced institutions;

■ Allocations per institution are determined by the number of Pell Grant recipients by full-time enrollment;

■ Institutions are required to use a portion of the institutional share of new allocations to implement evidence-based practices to mitigate COVID-19 and conduct outreach to students regarding the opportunity to receive a financial aid adjustment because of the recent unemployment of a family member or other changes in financial circumstances; among other requirements.

This Act is the culmination of a years-long advocacy effort by NEA members that builds on previous packages but is far more comprehensive and robust than any relief bill to date. It represents the largest anti-poverty piece of legislation Congress has passed in many decades.

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? 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

On the Cover: Now-retired English teacher Diane Wigert spoke to senators about a horrific classroom experience with the hope of getting legislation passed prohibiting secretive recording in schools. Read her story on page 7. Read about NSEA's efforts to get teachers vaccinated on page 11.

The Truth and Unicorns: Busting NSEA Myths



**NSEA President
Jenni Benson**



**Executive
Director
Maddie Fennell**

“

Our leadership team traveled to meet with members face-to-face in their schools and communities to hear their concerns and share them with policy makers.

”

Some myths can be harmless, like the ones that insist unicorns are real. Then, there are hurtful rumors, misinformation and mistruths spread through our society via the communication streams we swim in all day long – news, social media, text messages and more. We used to hear “you can’t argue with the facts.” Now arguments are abundant as perceptions and opinions are disguised as facts.

So, while Jenni’s 3-year-old granddaughter will assure you that unicorns exist, we want to address some of the inaccurate myths out there that we have heard about public education, the NSEA and the National Education Association.

Myth: NSEA is too political.

Fact: Every decision in education is a political decision. How you receive your teaching certificate, the standards you teach to, the number of students in your classroom, your curriculum, the resources you can access and the amount on your paycheck are just drops in the bucket of political decisions that affect public education. If we aren’t advocating for public education systems, students and employees, then others will be advocating for their agendas. The implementation gap – the breach between policy development and application – will grow wider if our voices are absent in decision making.

Myth: NSEA only supports Democrats.

Fact: The NSEA candidate recommendation process is run by NSEA members from across the state who choose to take part in interviewing candidates about their views on numerous education topics. Of the recommended legislative candidates from 1984 to 2020, 42% were Republicans, 56% Democrats, and 2% Independent/Libertarian. NSEA works closely with candidates from both parties who support public school students and employees.

Myth: NSEA decisions are made solely by the president or the executive director.

Fact: We don’t even wish for this! We are proud to work for a member-driven association. The NSEA leadership is elected by the membership at the local, district, state and national levels. Policies are adopted in a democratic, decision-making process at each level. These bodies set the goals of the association that are then implemented by leadership with the assistance of staff.

Myth: NSEA and NEA support Abortion.

Fact: While NEA has spent tens of thousands of dollars defending the rights of NEA members to choose childbirth over abortion and to exercise other family rights guaranteed by Roe v. Wade, it has not spent one

penny under the legal services program to defend the right to abortion. In fact, NEA has supported only four cases based on the privacy rights granted in Roe v. Wade: a woman who was fired after she was raped and refused to abort her child; an unmarried teacher who became pregnant and was fired for immorality; a teacher who was fired for getting a divorce (NEA argued that the right to

divorce is protected, just like the right to have children. The court agreed, saying that “...Roe clearly established the existence of a constitutionally-protected right to privacy which includes matters relating to procreation and marriage.”); and another right to privacy case that established a teacher’s right to breastfeed her baby in privacy on school grounds during her duty-free lunch. If expenditures for legal services are any measure, then it is more accurate to describe NEA as “pro-child,” “pro-life” and “pro-family” than “pro-abortion.”

Myth: NEA doesn’t care about Nebraska members.

Fact: Each year, NEA provides Nebraska with substantial funding for our programs in support of members. The organizational specialist that works in your area is partially funded by NEA. This year, NEA has provided more than \$1 million in grants to build our programs in professional development, mentoring, instructional coaching, racial and social justice and more. NEA utilizes the economic power of more than 3 million members to provide significant financial savings through NEA Member Benefits.

Myth: Teacher unions are blocking schools from reopening.

Fact: Just as some Nebraska school districts struggled in the fall to determine how to safely open schools for students and staff, districts across the country are now grappling with those questions in their own context. Jenni penned a great opinion editorial on this topic that you can read here:

<https://bit.ly/3qMYQZ1>

Myth: NSEA doesn’t support rural Nebraska.

Fact: NSEA is a member-run organization serving a diverse membership across our state. Our leadership team traveled to meet with members face-to-face in their schools and communities to hear their concerns and share them with policy makers. Our staff advocate for the economic and employment rights of our members every day. NSEA provides political support for local school board races and bond issues when requested.

Have more questions about NSEA and NEA? Reach out to your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.



Myth: Unicorns are real. Don’t tell that to Benson’s 3-year-old granddaughter, Zayah.

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Loan Forgiveness Now Open for July 1 Coursework

Educators seeking advanced endorsements through college coursework may now apply for tuition reimbursement via the state's Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program.

The application process will open on the Nebraska Department of Education website at 9 a.m. on Thursday, April 1. All the updated documents for this year's application will be available beginning Thursday, March 25.

The reimbursement in this round is for classes from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. Individuals must apply each year.

EETP provides a limited number of forgivable loans to Nebraska teachers

enrolled in an eligible graduate program at a Nebraska institution of higher education. 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 consecutive years. To be considered, an educator must:

- Be employed as a certificated teacher in an approved or accredited public or private PK-12 school in Nebraska;

- Be enrolled in an approved graduate program at an eligible Nebraska institution; and

- Be a resident Nebraska student. Applicants must also complete:

- 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 an endorsement is already held; or
- A graduate degree that will result in an additional endorsement not considered a shortage area which your administrator believes will be beneficial to students.

For more details, go to:

www.education.ne.gov/educatorprep/eetp-current-teachers

You Could Be Nebraska's 2022 Teacher of the Year

In 2022, one teacher will represent the good work of all Nebraska teachers as the Nebraska Teacher of the Year. Application forms for the 2022 Nebraska Teacher of the Year are now available through your administration or at the website listed below. Teachers may nominate a colleague for the honor or self-nominate.

Applications must be postmarked by midnight (CDT) Aug. 11, 2021. A panel will review applications, and up to five finalists will be selected for interviews in August. The 2022 recipient will be recognized at an awards luncheon in November 2021.

Since 1972, the Nebraska Teacher of the Year program has recognized outstanding certified teachers in a pre-K-12 classroom setting who plan to continue in active teacher status in a state-approved or accredited school.

A two-minute public speaking video is required. The application seeks information on educational background and personal development, community involvement, philosophy of teaching and learning, and commentary on the teaching profession.

The Teacher of the Year will maintain a regular teaching schedule while also participating in a year of professional learning through the National Teacher of the Year Program, speaking at various

functions such as the Administrator Days conference, Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association conference and the NSEA Delegate Assembly, and participating in workshops and school programs across Nebraska, the weeklong National Teacher of the Year Washington Recognition Week in Washington, D.C., the weeklong International Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama, and the weeklong National Teacher of the Year Program Next Steps Conference in Princeton, New Jersey.

The NSEA, Nebraska Council of School Administrators, Nebraska Association of School Boards, corporate partners Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska and Data Recognition Corporation, and the State Board of Education present cash awards or grants to the Teacher of the Year and other finalists.

See page 29 for details on a webinar that will help with the application process. For additional details, go to:

www.education.ne.gov/toy

Those interested may reach program coordinator Lora Sypal at (402) 471-5059 or:

lora.sypal@nebraska.gov

Vacancies Show Teacher Shortages in Most Areas

More than a dozen pre-K-12 teaching positions have been identified as shortage areas following a Nebraska Department of Education survey of Nebraska public and private school systems last fall.

Teacher shortages were declared in virtually every curriculum area. The survey requested information from all 244 Nebraska public school districts, the state's 17 Educational Service Units and 178 private and parochial schools. The data has been reported to the U.S. Department of Education. The shortage areas affect federal loan forgiveness.

NSEA President Jenni Benson said the survey is another indication of the need to do more to encourage young people to consider teaching as a career. NSEA has provided robust support for Educators Rising chapters in Nebraska, which



encourage high school students to take a look at a teaching career, and also sponsors Aspiring Educators (formerly the Student Education Association of Nebraska) on 17 Nebraska college campuses.

NSEA also is advocating for improved pay for educators and LB529, which includes provisions to forgive \$1,000 of a state-managed loan program for teaching

certificate candidates during their student teaching semester.

"That's a start," Benson said, "but we can and need to do so much more. The state offers grants to reimburse Nebraska businesses for up to \$7,500 for interns, with a mentor for those interns as part of the grant requirements. Pre-service educators should get similar consideration."

State officials said teachers employed to teach in a content area designated as an official teacher shortage area by the federal government may be eligible for federal teacher loan forgiveness. For details on loan forgiveness, go to:

<https://studentaid.gov>

View the Nebraska shortage report at:
education.ne.gov/educatorprep/teacher-shortage-survey

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Using Her Teacher Voice: In February, now-retired English teacher Diane Wigert spoke to the legislature's Education Committee in favor of banning secretive recordings after her safety was threatened by a student's maliciously edited viral video.

Manipulated Classroom Video Leads to Safety Threats

NSEA Supports Bill to Ban Surreptitious Recordings in Schools

The spring day in 2018 was a day like most others in Diane Wigert's high school English class. In the last period, she was helping students practice for a writing exam with an exercise in developing counter arguments.

"I try to get them to think for themselves, to do research, to find evidence and to share opinions," Wigert said.

The essay prompt revolved around the idea of public safety vs. personal freedom – a topic Wigert had broached and a method she had used in all her earlier periods that day and for years before.

This day, a few students quickly and purposely turned the conversation political and waited with their cell phone camera at the ready.

"They ended up videoing my classroom without my knowledge and without my permission, and then took that information and edited it to misrepresent me," Wigert said.

The real trouble began when these students shared their manipulated version of the video. It quickly went viral, spreading throughout the community and even across state lines. Wigert's life and the lives of her family members soon became a nightmare.

"My personal safety, the safety of my family members, and even the safety of some of my colleagues was imperiled," Wigert said in her testimony to the Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee in February. "There was a clear and present danger, made obvious by the death threats we received through phone calls and the internet. My dogs barked throughout the night. Beer cans and trash were often found strewn in my front yard by people who

had visited my yard during the middle of the night to intimidate me. I didn't see it coming. I don't think anybody did."

The threats and intimidation continued for weeks. Wigert wondered how she was going to make it through each day, let alone through the few months until her previously planned retirement at the end of the school year.

"There was a lot of pain inflicted not just on me, but on my family, on my colleagues, on the school district, on their fellow students. Everybody was hurting," she said.

To Wigert's knowledge, the students who made the video were never punished. She continued to teach them every day while looking out for herself, her colleagues and other students in her classes.

"What they didn't know is there were a lot of days I just wanted to throw up," Wigert said. "It took everything I had, but at the same time, I focused on the people who believed in me and the students who were depending on me, because that was the only way. I hadn't done anything wrong, but I was made to be a scapegoat or a target for whatever reason."



Nebraska
Legislature '21

Bill Would Ban Secretive Recordings

In January, Lincoln Sen. Adam Morfeld introduced LB518, a bill that would add surreptitious electronic surveillance – or unauthorized, secretive recording – to a lengthy list of prohibited behaviors under the Student Discipline Act. According to the bill, this means "intruding upon the privacy of other persons by secretly listening to, monitoring, or recording," or attempting any of those,

“by means of any mechanical, electronic, or other listening device any conversation engaged in by the other persons, unless authorized to do so by all participants engaging in the conversation.”

It would apply to both in-person and remote school activities.

It would not apply to surveillance authorized by a court order, when one party believes a criminal act is being committed, to traditional schoolwide surveillance systems or when a teacher authorizes recording of a class or lab session.

The Student Discipline Act already prohibits conduct like violence, drug possession, sexual assault, making threats and bullying on school property or during school-sponsored activities.

The bill does not carry criminal consequences at the school level, but it does provide for long-term suspension, expulsion or mandatory reassignment of a student who violates the act.

Privacy, Safety Issue

Nebraska is a one-party recording state, meaning someone who records another can legally do so without the other's permission. As proposed, LB518 would only apply in the school setting and doesn't necessarily include institutions of higher education.

Morfeld teaches at Doane University in Crete. He told the Education Committee he's concerned about recordings like this at the university level, too.

“That can be used to really embarrass people. It's not just a privacy concern for the teacher, it's also a privacy concern for the fellow students,” Morfeld said. “It's not going to be an issue that goes away because online learning is only here to stay and grow in a different way.”

Wigert cited cases in several other states where surreptitious recordings have harmed or defamed teachers. In a February case at a parochial school in Omaha, a student recorded a teacher who spoke a racial slur while reading from a biography of a Black civil rights leader. The clip was taken out of context and shared on Twitter.

“I think we are so used to this kind of thing now, it's commonplace. Perhaps senators will think, ‘How could we possibly legislate that?’” Wigert said. “It has got to start somewhere, and classrooms are different. Classrooms are a teacher's domain. It's their room. When you have students videotaping and then sending out virally and misrepresenting – in my case, misrepresenting me – all of a sudden, I'm a victim in my own classroom, and my classroom doesn't feel safe anymore. Not to me, and there are also other students in the classroom who are horrified by how this went down.”

The legislature's Education Committee is looking to determine how the bill would be carried out and how it would apply in certain circumstances, like remote learning.

Because Nebraska is a one-party recording state, Wigert said it was nearly impossible to find a written policy she could use in this situation. She encouraged school districts to write their own policies against surreptitious recording, even if LB518 doesn't pass this session.

NSEA Has Your Back

Throughout the ordeal, Wigert relied on NSEA for guidance. Her organizational specialist at the time was Michelle Raphael, who is now NSEA's Field and Special Projects Manager.

“Michelle would just check on me to make sure I was OK physically and mentally. She always said to me, ‘I've got your back,’” Wigert said.

The two met with one another and checked in regularly. Raphael referred Wigert's case to NSEA's Department of Advocacy, which provided more guidance and advice for Wigert.

“

***It's going to happen
to somebody again.
This is a matter of time.***

***- Diane Wigert, on why
she's supporting LB518***

”

NSEA supports LB518 as one of nearly 80 bills on which it has testified or taken a stance this legislative session. Wigert noted that NSEA reviewed more than 600 bills this session.

“While we're in the classroom busily teaching, they're watching out for us. When it comes to legislating education, we can trust NSEA to keep us informed. It is in our best interest to pay attention to their notifications,” Wigert said.

“It doesn't have to take a personal incident like mine to have them have my back. Now I have a whole different appreciation for that.”

Speaking Out for Change

Cards, flowers, kind words and support came pouring in from other teachers and students to let Wigert know she wasn't alone. She found the courage to testify before the legislature and said she wanted to do it for those who stuck by her during the incident.

“I needed to step up and stand tall for them,” she said.

She also wanted to speak for those who may not realize they could be the next victim of a surreptitious recording.

“It's going to happen to somebody again. This is a matter of time. Will it be as horrible of a situation as I went through? I hope not,

but what's to keep it from being?” Wigert said.

One of her goals is to get the message across that recordings like this can be detrimental not only to individuals but to schools and whole communities.

“This type of empowerment is dangerous. No one should be encouraged to spread misinformation about others especially when it can lead to serious, life-threatening consequences,” Wigert said. “We have to quit acting like things like this are OK.”

She hopes senators will take notice and pass LB518 to protect Nebraska teachers who could find themselves in a similar situation.

“I have always believed that things happen for a reason, and my story is no exception. Testifying in favor of LB518 is an important step forward in that story,” Wigert said. “I hope my testimony will assist in the passing of LB518, which will provide protection currently unavailable for teachers, students and school districts.”

NSEA Supports, Opposes Bills

NSEA members, leaders and staff testified or delivered written testimony on these bills at legislative committee hearings in February and March. Committees will vote whether to advance each bill to the full legislature for consideration and may amend the bills along the way. NSEA is watching more than 160 individual bills related to public education.

Multicultural Education

NSEA testified in support of LB359, which mandates all school districts to incorporate multicultural studies into all programs at the elementary, middle and secondary levels, with assistance from a full-time multicultural education consultant at the Nebraska Department of Education.

Special Education Transitions

LB527 would begin providing transition services to students with special needs at age 14 rather than age 16. NSEA supports the bill, which will better position these students to transition to life after high school. “These two years of school would provide families with more time for planning and decision making. This also allows advocates two more important years to learn a whole new vocabulary of service providers, file for disability services and learn about services that are available for young adults who don't have the capacity for work,” NSEA testimony said.

Community Schools Act

Through LB538, two community schools from each Congressional district would receive \$150,000 for five consecutive years

Bills would increase access to food

NSEA supports three bills addressing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. LB108 increases the gross income limit from 130 percent to 185 percent of the federal poverty level, allowing families to earn more money without losing SNAP benefits. LB121 allows those convicted of criminal activity to receive basic food assistance under SNAP.

"A parent's conviction shouldn't keep a child from eating," NSEA testimony said. "When families have food on the table, children come to school with food in their stomachs and ready to learn. Research tells us that childhood hunger has long-term and detrimental effects on cognition, physical and mental health, academic performance and behavior."

LB356 removes the Department of Health and Human Services' authority to cut SNAP benefits if a family does not meet specific work requirements.

"While families across the country aren't required to meet work requirements while COVID limits employment opportunities, Nebraska families are still burdened with this regulation," NSEA testimony said.

to fund a pilot community-based initiative matching the needs of students and families with resources in their communities. NSEA supports the program that would be funded with revenue from solar and wind energy providers renting school lands.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity

NSEA supports LB120, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity relative to employment. It adds these factors to the list already in state law, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, disability, marital status and national origin.

Health Department Control

During the pandemic, many school districts had trouble with accurately reporting virus cases, utilizing mitigation strategies and conducting contact tracing. Reporting was made more difficult by local health departments, who first had to seek approval from the state before implementing new measures.

LB637 would give local health departments the authority to make decisions about local responses to health emergencies.

"These local authorities are in the best situation to see first-hand how quickly situations are escalating and are nimble enough to institute measures that are in the best interest of public health and safety in their area," NSEA testimony said.

Purple Star Program

The Purple Star Program, found in LB5, provides schools an opportunity to showcase their actions to care for students of military families. NSEA supports LB5, which designates a staff member as a military point of contact to ease transitions. Participating schools will have information available online for families to use in making decisions, especially when they may be transitioning from assignments in other countries or time zones and may struggle to contact the school during working hours.

The program also includes a student-led transition program, giving young people the chance to be ambassadors for their school and foster a positive social transition. Staff will be provided professional development so they are ready to adapt instruction and understand how best to meet military families' needs.

YRTC Changes

LB426 allows the Department of Health and Human Services to contract for completion of a cost analysis of capital improvements and structural changes to the facilities at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center Kearney location and to report the results to the legislature. NSEA supports LB426, which will allow the legislature to see what resources are needed.

NSEA also supports LR25, which would require the legislature's Executive Board to appoint a YRTC Oversight Committee, extending the committee created in 2020.

Social Security

"Social Security and pension income are intended to allow elderly and disabled citizens to retire with dignity and to keep them out of poverty. These funds should not be used as a source of revenue for the state," NSEA said in support of LB64 and LB237, which would join Nebraska with the 37 states and the District of Columbia that have no income tax or do not include Social Security benefits in their calculation for taxable income.

'Erin's Law'

NSEA supports LB28, modeled after "Erin's Law," already in place in 37 states. It requires students in grades kindergarten through fifth to spend four hours per year in body awareness training, as well as teacher training, as a preventative method for reducing incidents of child sexual abuse. According to studies by the Crimes Against Children Research Center, 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse.

"It is imperative that our students are given the information – and even the vocabulary – necessary to keep themselves safe and know who and how to reach out to if they are being abused," NSEA testimony said.

Intermittent Substitution

"For years, school districts have struggled to navigate the federal law that allows retired teachers to return as a substitute to the school system they retired from on an 'intermittent basis' for 180 days following retirement – with no definition of 'intermittent,'" NSEA said in testimony.

NSEA supports LB146, which clearly defines intermittent as no more than eight days in a calendar month. This change will



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provide school districts clarity and flexibility to be able to utilize retired teachers from the first day of school.

Obscenity Defense

NSEA opposes LB282, a bill that repeals longstanding defense for teachers in grades kindergarten through 12th who unknowingly use obscene material in their teaching. The bill changes State Statute 28-813, which currently protects a teacher who may unknowingly use material within a textbook, a website or a video that has been approved by their school district. The bill inserts the word “postsecondary” into the statute, negating the defense for K-12 teachers.

“The NSEA certainly does not condone the use of obscene material in our schools,” testimony said. “However, we are cognizant of the fact that the definition of what constitutes obscenity changes over time, is different from person to person and means different things in different communities across the state.”

The testimony noted several existing remedies in state statute to remove a teacher who inappropriately uses unapproved curriculum materials, including loss of their teaching certificate and criminal penalties.

Paid Internships

Students with the experience of paid internships receive more job offers, can expect an increased earning power and are more prepared to enter the workforce than those who do not have the same opportunity. NSEA supports LB632, which would provide opportunities for low-income and first-generation college students and give them a chance to earn money to support themselves while completing educational training.

“We also hope future legislative bills would extend this same paid experience opportunity to student teachers who are preparing for a career in the classroom,” NSEA testimony said.

Workers’ Compensation

LB207 changes the waiting period to begin receiving benefits under the workers’ compensation law from seven to three days. It also reduces the number of days to start receiving retroactive benefits for those initial days away from work from six weeks to two weeks. In support of LB207, NSEA said few Nebraska school districts allow for injury leave in their contracts, meaning employees must use personal leave for injuries sustained while on the job until workers’ compensation kicks in.

Essential Workers

Currently, claims related to COVID-19 are not compensable under Nebraska Workers’ Compensation Law because COVID-19 does not qualify as an “accident”

Proposals to Benefit those in Early Childhood

NSEA supports LB640, which offers school districts incentives to provide quality early childhood education programs by increasing the current state aid reimbursement formula from 60 percent to 80 percent. Early childhood students deserve to be supported and weighted for state aid just as much as are their older, full-time fellow students, and early development opportunities could offset additional expenditures later in the K-12 system.

“Investing in quality early childhood education programs pays dividends that may reach up to \$13 per \$1 of investment,” NSEA testimony supporting LB342 said.

This bill appropriates \$2.5 million from the General Fund to the State Department of Education in fiscal years 2021-22 and 2022-23 for the Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund, known as Sixpence.

NSEA also wrote in support of LB625, which uses the existing Early Childhood Education Endowment Cash Fund to provide steady funding by adding a 4 percent surtax on high-income earners making more than \$500,000 as an individual or \$1 million as a family.

or “occupational disease.” If passed, LB441 would make COVID-19 claims by essential employees, which include public and private school employees, compensable. NSEA supports LB441, which creates the legal presumption that a compensable “accident” occurs when an essential worker is either: confirmed COVID-19 positive, dies from COVID-19 or was quarantined at the direction of their employer.

Indoor Air Quality

NSEA wrote in support of LB630, which creates a pilot program to study the efficacy of commercial air filters in classrooms to remove common pollutants and particulate matter and to study their impact on academic and behavioral performance.

Firearm Possession

LB417 would allow possession of a firearm on school grounds by any off-duty peace officer or law enforcement officer. NSEA opposes LB417 because of its broad definition of “peace officer.” In Nebraska, that definition extends to include “any person authorized to direct or regulate traffic.”

“We believe allowing more adults to bring weapons onto school property will only make the job more difficult for legitimate school security officials as they would have to discern, possibly at a moment’s notice, whether an armed school visitor they encounter actually has the authority to be on campus with a deadly weapon,” NSEA testimony said.

Mental Health Training

NSEA supports LB87, which puts a focus on mental health first aid support and training for schools receiving an innovation grant. The bill would help expand teachers’ toolkits and resources for supporting students as they become successful learners.

529 Plans

Allowing 529 account contributions to pay for K-12 education, as proposed

in LB681, allows users to bypass paying taxes in order to pay for private school. NSEA opposes LB681, which would drain millions of dollars from state revenue each year, further harming funding for public schools.

“The primary reason to have a 529 is because you can invest in education over nearly two decades, slowly growing principal – and interest on those funds – for postsecondary education,” NSEA wrote to the Revenue Committee. “Working poor and middle-class families would see little to no tax benefit for their contributions. To see even \$500 in tax relief, a family would need to save more than \$9,000 a year in a 529 account, which means that really the only people who would benefit from this are the wealthiest Nebraskans – those who have the least need for this kind of benefit.”

Minimum Wage Increase

NSEA supports LB480, which raises the minimum wage to \$25 in yearly increments starting in January 2022 and ending in January 2032. This will help students whose families earn minimum wage, as well as educators like cafeteria employees, custodians, paraeducators, other education support professionals and some college instructors who do not earn a living wage.

Classroom Funding

NSEA is opposed to LR21CA, a Constitutional amendment that would require the State of Nebraska to pay all classroom expenses related to public elementary and secondary schools.

The proposal comes with too many unknowns, and the cost of operating a classroom in different parts of the state varies widely. The proposal does not address how the bill would affect federal reimbursement of special education expenses, or if schools would still be able to fill funding gaps using property tax funding. NSEA is concerned with how the state would be able to pay classroom expenses without making major changes to the current state aid system.



Got It! From left, Sara Bounous, Renae Noble, Amy Gardener (seated) and Andrew Smith of Chadron Public Schools show their proof of vaccination cards after receiving their COVID-19 shots.

Advocacy in Action: Teachers Line Up for COVID-19 Vaccine

Great progress has been made on prioritizing school employees for the COVID-19 vaccination. While many school districts are working directly with their local health departments to get the vaccine, pharmacies across the state have also begun to prioritize school employees as critical workers.

This success comes after NSEA members and staff wrote letters and made calls to Gov. Pete Ricketts, asking him to stop pushing educators further down the priority list for vaccine administration.

"This is a great win for teachers and educational support professionals across the state to know they will now be safer in their own classrooms and have a lower risk of infecting themselves and others," NSEA President Jenni Benson said. "There is still work to be done, though, in making sure that every educator who wants a vaccine can get one."

NSEA urged educators in February and early March to send a clear message to Ricketts and the Department of Health and Human Services. Around 350 school staff wrote letters, asking to be treated as critical workers as outlined in the state's original Phase 1B plan.

"I am in a building with nearly 800 students and staff per day. I work lunch duty with 120-plus unmasked students at a time every single day," one educator wrote.

"My exposure, and that of my colleagues working in close contact with students and one another, is far, far greater," than a friend who works for an internet company who had already received a vaccine.

"Watching my colleagues in rural Missouri and just across the river in Iowa makes me saddened to see our lackluster rollout here in the great state of Nebraska," another wrote. "If teachers were considered

'essential workers' during the lockdowns, we should be treated as such."

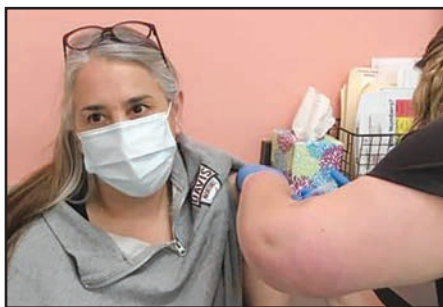
Thousands of Nebraska teachers began getting accepted for vaccine appointments in early March.

Some school districts have set up their own vaccination clinics. Others are working with their local health department through a lottery system to determine which schools will get vaccines first.

Still others are sending their teachers to pharmacies like Walmart and Hyvee to make appointments for the shots.

If you have an appointment scheduled with your school or local health district in the near future, NSEA encourages you to honor it. If not, contact your local pharmacy to see if vaccines are available in your area.

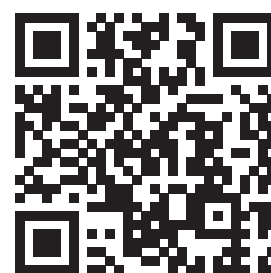
If you have questions about vaccines for teachers, call/text or email Brian Mikkelsen, NSEA Political Director, at 402-432-3397 or brian.mikkelsen@nsea.org.



Sign Up to Get the Vaccine

NSEA created a map of Public Health Departments across Nebraska. Use your smartphone to scan the QR code below to open the map. Click the location marker of a department near you to find details on how to register for a vaccine. You can also access the map at:

www.bit.ly/NEVaccineMap



Paul Schulte of Millard (above), Tarina Cox-Jones of Omaha (below) and Tracy Hartman-Bradley of Omaha (left) get their COVID-19 vaccinations.



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Subject	Catalog #	Course Title	Start Date	Stop Date
COUN	501	TOPICS IN COUNSELING	May 10	July 2
COUN	533	COUNSELING ETHICS & PROF IDENT	May 10	July 2
COUN	535	MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING	June 7	July 30
COUN	541	COUNSELING THEORIES	May 10	July 2
COUN	545	ESSENTIALS OF ADDICTION COUN	June 7	July 30
COUN	629	COUNSELING CHILDREN	May 10	July 2
COUN	632	CAREER & LIFESTYLE DEV	May 10	July 2
COUN	636	FAMILY COUNSELING	May 10	July 2
COUN	640	INTERNSHIP IN COUNSELING	May 10	July 30
EDAD	629	FUNDAMENTALS OF SCHOOL ADMIN	May 10	July 2
EDAD	629	FUNDAMENTALS OF SCHOOL ADMIN	June 7	July 30
EDAD	632	SUPERVISION OF INSTRUCTION	May 10	July 2
EDAD	633	SCHOOL ADMIN & LEADERSHIP	June 7	July 30
EDAD	634	SCHOOL BUS MGMT/FINANCE	June 7	July 30
EDAD	637	SCHOOL PLANT PLAN/MAINT	June 7	July 30
EDAD	638	PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION	May 10	July 2
EDCI	631	RESEARCH DESIGN/DATA ANALYSIS	June 7	July 30
EDCI	633	EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY	June 7	July 30
EDCI	635	CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT	May 10	July 2
EDCI	638	SCHOOL LAW	May 10	July 2
READ	634	LINGUISTIC FOUND/READING INSTR	May 10	June 4
SPED	532	SURVEY OF SPECIAL EDUC	June 7	July 30
SPED	555	CHAR. OF LEARNING DISABILITIES	June 7	July 30
SPED	630	CHAR OF BEHAV & EMOT DISABIL	May 10	June 4

Summer course listing is accurate as of March 3, 2021.

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2021 DA Will Go Virtual Again

Author, Filmmaker to Keynote Friday Evening Session

Plans are nearly complete for the 159th NSEA Delegate Assembly.

The NSEA's annual, member-driven business meeting, DA will be held virtually April 23-24. It will serve as an opportunity for networking and setting the rules of the road for the 2021-22 association year.

While professional development sessions will be on hiatus this year because of COVID-19 and the virtual format, attendees will hear from author and filmmaker Ted Dintersmith during the Friday evening session.

"Even being virtual, DA is always a great event, a wonderful place to talk about common issues, to meet colleagues and to begin to solve some of the sticky issues facing public education," NSEA President Jenni Benson said.

'What School Could Be'

The keynote address for the 2021 NSEA Delegate Assembly will highlight what Dintersmith has learned in conversations with thousands of educators across the country about what schools could be like if teachers keep innovating their work.

Dintersmith has produced films, keynotes and now a book that focus on the urgency of reimagining school to keep pace with the innovation that is reshaping society. He describes himself as an "education change agent."

During the 2015-2016 school year, he traveled for nine months of the school year, visiting all 50 states and stopping at 200 schools to meet thousands of people involved in education — students, teachers, administrators, parents, education policy makers, legislators and governors.

The result was his latest book, "What School Could Be: Insights and Inspiration from Teachers Across America."

"I saw the very best of U.S. education, and drew daily inspiration from remarkably innovative teachers," Dintersmith said on his website. "When I set out on the trip, I had no intention of writing a book. But this experience needs to be shared. It's easy today to dwell on the negative, but I was blown away by the positive things going on in U.S. schools."

Dintersmith also has organized and funded "Most Likely to Succeed," a feature-length documentary on education directed by Greg Whiteley. The film has been an official selection of 30 major film festivals and has aired in more than 7,000 communities in 35 countries around the globe.

In 2012, Dintersmith was appointed by President Obama to represent the U.S. at the United Nations General Assembly. In 2018, he received the prestigious NEA Friend of Education Award.

He is a graduate of the College of William and Mary with High Honors in English and Physics and went on to get a PhD in Engineering from Stanford, where he also taught.

Getting Down to Business

Delegates will spend the rest of Friday evening preparing for



Innovating Education: Ted Dintersmith has spent his recent professional career reimagining what education could look like with a little more innovation. He will speak April 23 as part of the annual NSEA Delegate Assembly.

Saturday's business. They will adopt a set of standing rules and review the order of business. Then, they'll hear an Association update from Benson and Executive Director Maddie Fennell. Break-out discussions and sharing feedback will close Friday evening.

On Saturday, delegates will discuss and debate proposed changes to bylaws and resolutions. The budget will be presented, and dues for 2021-22 will be set. Delegates also will consider New Business Items.

Bylaws are the rules that guide the Association's operation. Resolutions state the Association's collective beliefs on issues ranging from class size to teacher certification to teacher competency testing. New Business Items are tasks assigned for completion by the Association in the coming year.

Proposals for amendments to Bylaws were due by March 9.

New Business Items or amendments to Resolutions may be introduced in the Saturday morning session.

Elections Planned

Delegates will also select the NSEA Board of Directors At-Large representatives for the Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee and Higher Education Committee.

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

Tentative Order of Business: NSEA Virtual Delegate Assembly 2021

NSEA President Jenni Benson, Lincoln, Presiding

Pre-Assembly Activities

All times listed are Central Time. All meetings will be held online.

Tuesday, April 20: Audit Committee, 5:30 p.m.

Resolutions Hearing, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 21: Practice for Delegates, 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 22: DA Elections Committee, 6 p.m.

Budget Hearing, 7 p.m.

Friday, April 23: Online Credentialing of Delegates begins at 5:15 p.m.

Saturday, April 24: Online Credentialing of Delegates begins at 8:15 a.m.

Friday, April 23 ♦ 6 p.m.

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance

National Anthem

Report of Credentials Committee

Adoption of Standing/Procedural Rules

Adoption of Order of Business

Introductions and Overview

Keynote by Ted Dintersmith, Author of "What School Could Be"

Association Update by Jenni Benson, NSEA President and Maddie Fennell, NSEA Executive Director

Breakout Discussions and Report Out

Adjournment

Saturday, April 24 ♦ 9 a.m.

Elections Committee 8:30 AM

Call to Order

Report of Credentials Committee

Nominations: NSEA At-Large Representatives to the Board of Directors: EMAC and Higher Education

Candidate Remarks

New Educator Team Report

Report and Debate on Proposed Bylaws Amendments

Voting on Candidates and Bylaws

Legislative Update

Budget Presentation for 2021-2022

Report of the Auditing Review Committee

Elections Committee Report (when available)

Report and Actions on Resolutions

Committee Reports to the Assembly

Action on New Business Items

Action on Dues Proposal for 2021-2022

Adjournment

Parliamentarian: John Heineman

2021-22 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 24 will consider and act on this proposal. For the 2021-22 Association year, the NSEA Board of Directors recommends the dues for these certificated classes of NSEA membership be as follows:

Active: \$421.00 **Half-time Active:** \$210.50 **Active Substitute:** \$210.50 **Non-Active Sub:** \$105.25

The total NSEA dues and assessments for 2020-21 were \$416. The total NSEA dues and assessments for the current year and the proposal for next year are summarized below:

	2020-21	2021-22	Change (%)
General Fund Dues	\$391	\$396	\$5 ... (1.28%)
Ballot Contingency Fund.....	\$10	\$10	\$0 (0%)
State PAC.....	\$15	\$15	\$0 (0%)
Total	\$416	\$421	\$5 .. (1.20%)

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 2021-22 have been proposed at no more than \$202, a \$2 increase.

As noted, the 2021-22 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 \$34,000 in 2021-22.

ESP Dues Tier	NSEA Dues
Active ESP (salary of \$34,000 or more)	\$421.00 (100 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$27,200 to \$33,999)	\$378.90 (90 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$20,400 to \$27,199)	\$294.70 (70 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$13,600 to \$20,399)	\$210.50 (50 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$6,800 to \$13,599)	\$126.30 (30 percent of teacher dues)
Active ESP (\$6,799 or less)	\$42.10 (10 percent of teacher dues)

NSEA Dues History

Budget Year	NSEA Dues	Percent Increase
2021-22	\$421	1.20
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

2021-22 Proposed Bylaw Revisions

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 1

■ Article I: Membership

SECTION 2. There shall be eight classes of membership in NSEA: Active Professional, Active Education Support Professional, Substitute, Reserve, Special Services, Student Aspiring Educators, Retired and Staff.

(e) Student Aspiring Educator membership shall be open to any student enrolled in or preparing for a program of study in an accredited institution of higher learning that qualifies the student for a career in education or serving as an elected NSEA Aspiring Educator officer or an officer of one of its affiliates. A student who is eligible for NSEA membership in both Student Aspiring Educator and Active membership categories may, with the approval of the NSEA Executive Committee, join NSEA as an Student Aspiring Educator member.

Remaining Section 2 stays the same.

Rationale: This amendment updates language to reflect the name change from *Student Educators Association of Nebraska (SEAN)* to *Aspiring Educators*.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 2

■ Article II: Officers

SECTION 2. The term of office of the President and the Vice President shall be three years. The term of office of each such officer shall commence on August/September 1. No person shall be elected to the office of the President or Vice President for more than two consecutive terms.

SECTION 4. Any Active member is eligible to hold NSEA office of President, Vice President or NEA Director. No fewer than 90 days prior to the regular Delegate Assembly at which elections shall occur, NSEA shall notify Active members of vacancies to be filled by publishing a notice in NSEA's magazine, *The Voice*.

Nominations/Candidates for the offices of President, Vice President and NEA Director must be filed in writing with the NSEA Executive Director no later than February 15 of the year in which the election is to take place. may declare their candidacy at any time. All candidates who file during the nominations window will be provided the NSEA Elections Guidelines. Any candidate who wishes to have campaign information included in the Delegate Assembly digital packet must submit the information to the Executive Director or Associate Executive Director no fewer than 45 days prior to Delegate Assembly. To have his/her/their name placed on the ballot, the candidates for the offices of President, Vice President or NEA Director must be nominated by February 15, from the floor during the first session of the Delegate Assembly.

If a vacancy occurs after February 15, candidates for General Officer positions must be nominated from the floor during the Delegate Assembly to have their names placed on the ballot.

The number of votes cast for each nominee for office shall be announced to the Delegate Assembly by the Chair of the Elections Committee, and the candidate receiving a majority of votes cast shall be elected. Should no candidate receive a majority vote in the first ballot, a run-off election shall be held immediately between the two candidates receiving the greatest number of votes.

Remaining sections stay the same.

Rationale: This amendment changes the date for beginning the term of office from August 1 to September 1 in order to provide opportunity for the Board to finish negotiations and other business before the outgoing members' terms expire. The new date also corresponds with the NEA's calendar. Furthermore, the change will allow one more month for incoming officers to work with outgoing officers before assuming full responsibility.

Furthermore, the amendment requires candidates for office to file nominations by February 15 so they may receive information from the NSEA and ensure that they are meeting campaign guidelines. A procedure is also in place should a vacancy occur after February 15.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 3

■ Article III: Board of Directors

SECTION 1. The NSEA Board of Directors shall consist of the President; the Vice President; the NEA Directors for Nebraska; the at-large representatives of

the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC), the Higher Education Academy, and Education Support Professionals (ESPs); elected representatives of NSEA-Retired and the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) NSEA Aspiring Educators; and representatives of each NSEA district association. The Board shall be apportioned on the basis of one person-one vote. Each NSEA district association shall be entitled to at least one member on the NSEA Board of Directors. Each district association member of the Board must represent the same number of constituents (with variation not to exceed plus or minus 10 percent). The representation ratio of NSEA Board of Directors members to constituents shall be determined by the NSEA Board of Directors.

NSEA Delegate Assembly and District associations shall elect representatives to the NSEA Board of Directors. Representatives must be Active members of NSEA in accordance with NSEA policy to insure open nominations, ballots and a system for run-off vote. Representatives may be elected for no more than two consecutive terms of three years and shall assume office on August/September 1 following their election. No person shall hold simultaneously more than one seat on the NSEA Board of Directors, either as a general officer or as a district association Representative or President.

The President of NSEA shall inform the president of the district when the district qualifies for an additional representative. Insofar as possible, an equal number of members shall be elected each year. The length of the initial term of new members shall be determined by the Board rotation.

(a) A vacancy on the NSEA Board of Directors shall be filled by the district affected. Such appointments shall extend to the end of the unexpired term of the position being filled.

(b) If a vacancy occurs in an at-large representative position on the NSEA Board of Directors during the first or second year of a term, such vacancy shall be filled by the NSEA Board of Directors, which shall elect a successor to serve until the next meeting of the Delegate Assembly. The Delegate Assembly shall then elect a successor for the remainder of the term. In the event a vacancy occurs during the third year of a term, the NSEA Board of Directors shall elect a successor for the remainder of the term.

Districts losing a seat on the NSEA Board of Directors as of the membership count on January 15 shall drop a member at the close of the NSEA year by not electing a representative for the vacant post. Districts gaining a seat on the NSEA Board of Directors shall add a member at the beginning of the next NSEA year.

If a county or local association is transferred to another NSEA district by action of the NSEA Board of Directors, district association representative(s) who are members in that local association or county will continue to serve on the NSEA Board through the next July/August 31. Any vacancy created by this action will be filled by election or appointment by the respective district association.

Remaining sections stay the same.

Rationale: This amendment updates language to reflect the name change from *Student Educators Association of Nebraska (SEAN)* to *Aspiring Educators*.

Furthermore, this amendment changes the date for beginning the term of office from August 1 to September 1 in order to provide opportunity for the Board to finish negotiations and other business before the outgoing members' terms expire. The new date also corresponds with the NEA's calendar. Furthermore, the change will allow one more month for incoming officers to work with outgoing officers before assuming full responsibility.

This proposed change also addresses the term of office for NSEA At-Large Board members elected at Delegate Assembly.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 4

■ Article V: Delegate Assembly

SECTION 2. Active, Retired and Student Aspiring Educator members of NSEA are eligible to be delegates to the Delegate Assembly as provided in Section 3. All delegates shall have equal rights and shall be entitled to one vote, except as designated in Section 3.

SECTION 3. The Delegate Assembly shall be composed of the General Officers of NSEA, the President and Vice President of each district association, voting members of the Board of Directors, the presidents of Aspiring Educators/SEAN and NSEA-Retired and a number of delegates on the basis of:

- one delegate for each 300 NSEA StudentAspiring Educator members or major fraction thereof;
- one delegate for each 300 NSEA-Retired members or major fraction thereof;
- each NSEA cluster delegate (local associations with fewer than 26 Active members shall be clustered for representation at Delegate Assembly);
- one delegate for each 50 Active members or major fraction thereof of each chartered local association.

SECTION 6. The Delegate Assembly shall elect the General Officers of NSEA and the at-large representative of the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC), the Higher Education Academy and the Education Support Professionals (ESPs). All elections shall be by ballot except when there is only one candidate for the position. In this case, the Chair shall declare such candidate elected.

NominationsCandidates for General Officers and the at-large Board representative positions may must be filed in writing with the NSEA Executive Director no later than February 15 of the year in which the election is to take place, declare their candidacy at any time. All candidates who file during the nominations window will be provided the NSEA Election Guidelines. Any candidate who wishes to have campaign information included in the Delegate Assembly digital packet must submit the information to the Executive Director or Associate Executive Director no fewer than 45 days prior to Delegate Assembly. To have their name placed on the ballot, the candidates for General Officers and the at-large Board representatives must be nominated by February 15.

If a vacancy occurs after February 15, To have a his/her name placed on the ballot, candidates for General Officers and at-large Board representative positions must be nominated from the floor during the first session of the Delegate Assembly to have their name placed on the ballot.

Remaining Sections stay the same.

Rationale: This amendment updates language to reflect the name change from Student Educators Association of Nebraska (SEAN) to Aspiring Educators.

Furthermore, the amendment requires candidates for office to file nominations by February 15 so they may receive information from the NSEA and ensure that they are meeting campaign guidelines. A procedure is also in place should a vacancy occur after February 15.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 5

■ Article I: Membership SECTION 2.

(d) The NSEA Board of Directors may require special services membership in NSEA for individuals no longer actively employed in education-related employment in order to be eligible to participate in any insurance program sponsored in whole or in part by NSEA. Membership requirements and dues amounts, if any, will be set annually by the NSEA Board of Directors.

(f) NSEA-Retired membership shall be open to any NSEA member who has retired and reached the age of forty-five (45) years or more or an individual who is eligible to receive benefits under a school employee retirement system in Nebraska or another state and has (a) held Active, Substitute, Reserve, or Staff membership in NSEA or another state affiliate or comparable membership in a corresponding membership category in the year in which employment ended; and b) who is not eligible for Active membership and who was employed for at least five (5) years in a position that qualified them for Active membership but are no longer so employed. NSEA-Retired members are eligible to be voting delegates to the NSEA Delegate Assembly and the NEA Representative Assembly and may hold appointive positions in NSEA. NSEA-Retired members shall be eligible to receive benefits and services of the NEA, NEA-Retired, NSEA and NSEA-Retired that are authorized by the respective Boards of Directors.

Remaining Sections stay the same.

Rationale: The adjustment in NSEA-Retired membership requirements will be congruent with NEA-Retired membership requirements with this bylaw change. The previous requirement for active membership the year prior to retired membership is no longer necessary as it was previously included to ensure our active members of the association received a lower rate of Special Services dues, which are being discontinued for the EHA Direct Bill plan. The additional categories detailed in section (a) will no longer be necessary. This change also will expand possible membership in the Retired Association.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment 6

■ Article III: Board of Directors

SECTION 4. The NSEA Board of Directors shall enact its own rules and procedures for governing the conduct of its meetings.

(a) The NSEA Board of Directors shall notify NSEA members of the time, place and agenda of each of its meetings no fewer than 2 days in advance of such meetings.

(b) A summary of all actions items and policies approved during Board of Directors meetings shall be made available for NSEA members within 10 working days or prior to the next convened meeting.

Rationale: Much of the association business is conducted by the NSEA Board of Directors. This amendment allows members to be aware of all the work that the Board undertakes. It also increases transparency and the ability of members to engage with their representatives on the Board of Directors to ensure they are representing their views. While traditional minutes that detail board discussion are not needed here, members should be able to see the actions taken and policies adopted by the board since these often impact all members of the association.

Survey Looks at Educator Finances

A national survey by NEA conducted in November 2020 found that two of every three members (68 percent) reported that a staff member at their school or institution had a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19. Nearly the same number, 66 percent knew of a confirmed student case.

Overall, 52 percent of educators have paid for all or part of the cost of personal protective equipment for use in school, and 24 percent have covered all or part of the cost of such equipment for student use.

The survey sought to gather data about educator financial circumstances and experiences and to inform economic programs and student debt relief initiatives.

The survey addressed educator pay and benefits, economic effects of the pandemic and student loan debt.

Respondents included pre-K-12 educators, higher education members and education support professionals.

The survey found:

■ Educators have spent an average of \$251 on pandemic-related resources, with pre-K-12 educators spending an average of \$291 and higher education members spending an average of \$280.

■ More than a third (35 percent) of pre-K-12 educators said the pandemic has made them more likely to retire or leave education earlier than planned. One in four higher education professionals said the same.

■ Overall, 38 percent of educators reported working full-time from home. Higher education professionals (52 percent) and ESPs (55 percent) were most likely to be working from home.

■ Pre-K-12 ESPs were most likely to be working full-time in-person at 58 percent, followed by pre-K-12 teachers at 41 percent.

■ Pre-K-12 teachers were the least likely to have experienced a reduction in work hours, pay or benefits, a furlough or temporary layoff, or a permanent layoff. Overall, 29 percent of educators experienced at least one of these impacts.

■ The percentage of educators participating in at least one of 11 government and social safety net programs increased from 20 percent prior to the pandemic to 32 percent since March 2020.



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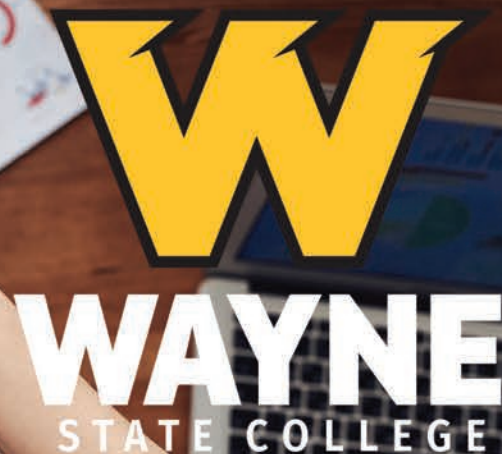


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What's Relevant to Your Students?

Reflecting Identity Helps Build Reading Skills

By Dr. Beckie Tuttle

Teachers teach a variety of students who bring an enormous range of diversity into the learning environment. There are no one-size-fits-all approaches to the work of teaching.

Teachers must be mindful of whom they are teaching and the range of needs that students will bring into the classroom.

Moreover, the social context that shapes students' experiences is vast, complex and integral to what decisions are made and why (H. R. Milner, 2011). As a reading teacher, I often find myself assigning reading books that children aren't interested in, but rather what interests me.

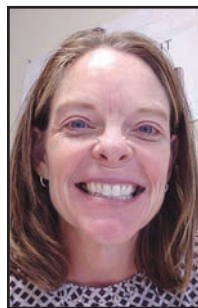
My challenge as an educator was my preoccupation with what I wanted them to read. I didn't take their interests into account. It wasn't until the conversation in a small group one day turned to the girls I was working with talking about a singer they heard on social media that I realized I needed to listen more and talk less. I had no idea who this singer was. The girls went on to tell me about how the singer's hair was just like one of the girls in our small group, which opened a discussion of their hair versus mine. This conversation then turned into a search for books about black girls' hair. I had never seen this much excitement from these girls. That day I realized they should be allowed to relate more personally to what they are learning. I challenged myself with the question, "How would learning be more successful and meaningful to children if what they were reading was relevant to them?"

The children I worked with at an afterschool program were African American and living in minoritized communities. Sociologist Louis Wirth (1945) defined a minority group as "any group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination" (Wirth, 1945). African Americans and Hispanics are often incorrectly considered minority groups. However, they are actually minoritized. Acknowledging this difference keeps the focus on the situation out of their control rather than focus on being subordinate to another group (G. R. Howard, 2007).

Early on in this project, I learned that when children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when they see distorted images, negative or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how devalued they are in the society they are a part of (C.M. Tschida et al., 2014).

Inventive Strategies

To explore strategies that foster children's voices, I designed a project/experiment to examine merging and creating culturally



Tuttle

relevant strategies for employing the framework in the school setting. I wanted the children to draw on the sources they learned at the after-school program and use them to be successful in their classrooms at school and to make sense of the world. It is important for children to feel relevant and comfortable in any setting.

Completing this project at the after-school program allowed affordances that are not possible in a classroom setting. The majority of children in the after-school program were African American. They arrive there after a long day of school in an environment that is very different from a structured classroom setting. I am used to teaching in a classroom that is structured, quiet, and students that mostly wanted to learn what you were teaching them. I kept reminding myself that this was not my classroom, and these children were not my students in the school sense. The children's attitudes were relaxed in a way that I had to be inventive with my strategies.

The first step was the process of gaining their trust and took a lot less time and effort because I had been at this community center for over a year. I wasn't a new person that they had to get to know. They were already as familiar with me as I was with them. We began every session with a snack and a review of their day. The review could be school-related or something that happened before school. If the conversation seemed to be going flat due to a slow day at school, or at home, we would talk about their favorites. Their favorite YouTube channel, their favorite food, their favorite music and what they did for fun were discussed, along with various other topics. We did this routine until it was time to move on to something different. The children were losing interest in our conversations. I decided we needed to move on to reading books together. Reading books together was another way I was getting to know them. I had read books in the past with various kids at this after-school program so I knew I could keep their attention.

A Sense of Belonging

According to A.M. Gallagher, in schools, high-interest reading is being squeezed out in favor of more test preparation practice. Sustained silent reading time is being abandoned because it is often seen as "soft" or "nonacademic" (2009). Since this iteration took place at an after-school center, high-interest books were essential. I continued reading to them at the beginning of each session but began integrating books that were purposefully written about times in our history that shined a light on African Americans.

By pure coincidence, I began reading a book called, *Stella By Starlight* by Sharon Draper. This book addresses life in the segregated South in 1932, as seen by a young 11-year-old growing up African American in Bumblebee, North Carolina. The plot includes the Ku Klux Klan and segregated schools. When I began reading this book, I noticed the girls' attention seemed to perk up. This book began a conversation about segregation that allowed the girls to begin researching other books about this subject. There were

Google searches that led to reading about brave girls like Ruby Bridges and females working for NASA.

The girls decided to create projects about what they researched. We worked on these projects along with reading *Stella by Starlight*. As the semester went on, I began to see how much the girls grew over this time together. Our shared time before reading went from a struggle to find something good to share their day, to having to set a timer so that they would get some reading time in and not just talk about their day. Academically, they shared more stories from what happened at school. Their reading levels all improved. The girls would volunteer to read in front of the class at school whereas before they would not. They would talk about their reading in class as a positive, not negative experience. Their behavior in school, as well as at the center, began to change positively.

They seemed to have a better sense of belonging. They listened more and complimented each other in their work. They didn't say derogatory comments about themselves or the center as often as they used to. The girls' attitudes started to change as well. They went from girls who didn't want to read and did not do very well at school, to girls who liked to share stories of their school day.

Although the girls gained self-confidence and began to believe in themselves, I was the one who benefited

most from this experience. I learned how to address and then shatter the stereotypes associated with our own identities. I feel like I was able to create a safe, empathetic space for the girls to make mistakes, learn from each other's differences, and embrace their vulnerabilities in ways that made them more confident, mature, and strong. These girls taught me how to give them the benefit of the doubt, showed me that they deserved respect, and trained me on how to support them unconditionally.

Everything I learned from them I brought into my classroom this year. Without the experiences of the after-school program, I fear I would still be trying to control my students and teach them the way I think they should be taught. I now have a clearer picture of the importance of guiding instead of controlling their learning. Take the time to allow your students to share their voices and find out what is relevant to them. This extra, important step will pay off in the gains of your student.

Tuttle is a Scottsbluff native and a graduate of Nebraska Wesleyan University with a master's degree in historical studies and an EdD in teaching, curriculum and instruction with a focus on reading and technology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She taught at Park and Culler middle schools in Lincoln for 15 years and now teaches reading at Mickle Middle School in Lincoln.

DonorsChoose could fund your project

Apply for Next Round of Drawings by April 9

Teachers looking to fund classroom supplies or special projects could have their dreams realized in the DonorsChoose giveaway, sponsored by Horace Mann Educators Corporation.

The company is a contributor to the DonorsChoose nonprofit that connects public school teachers in need of classroom materials and experiences with individual donors who want to help. Since partnering with DonorsChoose in 2011, Horace Mann has donated more than \$4.4 million to classroom projects.

Enter now through April 9 for a chance to win funding for your project. The company will draw winners and fund at least \$2,000 in projects each day the week of April 5-9. Enter at:

<https://bit.ly/2OLdbry>

Register, Walk to Win \$1,000 for Your School

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska invites administrators to register their schools for National Walk at Lunch (NW@L) Day on Wednesday, April 28.

NW@L Day is an annual event hosted by BCBSNE encouraging Nebraskans to take a few minutes to lace up their sneakers and go for a walk wherever they can. This year, BCBSNE is teaming up with YMCAs across the state to bring NW@L Day to all Nebraska communities.

Not only is NW@L Day a fun way to keep students active, but by participating in the event, schools have the chance to receive a \$1,000 donation from BCBSNE for their physical education department.

Taking the pledge also benefits the community. BCBSNE will make a financial contribution to Special Olympics Nebraska when groups or individuals register to participate: \$20 for every school, company or other group and \$1 for every individual who registers.

Starting April 1, schools can take the NW@L Day pledge at:

NebraskaBlue.com/Walk

BCBSNE will make materials, including email templates, web and social media graphics and printable fliers and posters, available to promote the event to your students and their families by April 7 at:

NebraskaBlue.com/Walk-Resources

NDE Seeks Input on Health Education Standards

The Nebraska Department of Education released a draft of the Nebraska Health Education Standards and is seeking input from the public. The information collected will be used as part of the standards review and revision process.

State law requires updates to the standards for reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies every seven years. The NDE is expanding that effort to review and update standards for each subject area, including health

education, every seven years. Once approved by the State Board of Education, the standards create the framework for health education in Nebraska.

Input from health educators, higher education and community organizations was used to develop the current draft. Approval for the standards is expected in the fall of 2021.

Nebraska content area standards reflect the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn in a given content area.

By setting clear benchmarks for learning, content area standards provide guidance to teachers as they develop learning experiences for students. Standards do not prescribe particular curriculum, lessons, teaching techniques or activities.

Decisions about curriculum and instruction are made locally by individual school districts and classroom teachers.

The draft Health Education Standards are available for review and input at:

<https://bit.ly/3rBnJbx>



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Not New Roles, Just a Different Perspective



Dr. Kim Snyder,
Director,
NDE Statewide
Teacher and
Principal Support



Dr. Julie Downing,
NDE Educator
Effectiveness
Specialist



Ryan Ricenbaw,
NDE Leadership
and Learning
Network
Specialist

Educators wear many hats. They may need to fill a role similar to a parent, mentor, friend, therapist, nurse, and the list goes on. Educators must be prepared to fill these roles to provide advice, mend a scraped knee or a broken spirit, or listen.

To enact these roles, educators must possess an empathy that allows them to meet the needs of each student. Educators who are committed to this level of unconditional support, without allowing any labels, biases or predispositions to get in the way of truly supporting their students, possess an equity mindset.

The Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards provide the foundation within Nebraska's educator effectiveness system to support educators in understanding concepts such as equity. Engagement in the NTPPS requires educators to develop a personal and professional awareness of their school's context, and their own personal beliefs and dispositions. As a result, educators are better equipped to ensure an equitable educational experience for each student.

Consistent and necessary

What does a school focused on equity look like? It's not stand-alone work. It happens in small moments and conversations consistently when educators consider the marginalization and barriers present in their schools. Developing an equity mindset might appear to some as a daunting task. While equity conversations may be uncomfortable, they are necessary.

Schools focused on equity need only examine the roles educators are playing in their schools and classrooms to understand that through many of their current practices, they are already advocating for equity.

The Nebraska Department of Education has engaged in equity work by identifying its own roles in its advocacy for schools:

- Champions,
- Regulators,
- Capacity Builders,
- Connectors, and
- Change Agents

The identification of these roles enables the NDE to be intentional in its work to support Nebraska's schools. These same lenses can be utilized by the schools as well.

Roles in Reality

For example, what are some practices in which educators currently engage that allow them to be a Regulator for Equity? The NTPPS state an effective teacher "adheres to school policies, procedures, and regulations and models ethical behavior and integrity in accordance with the

established standards of the district."

The word equity doesn't appear in this NTPPS indicator, but if educators are living out the actions of this indicator successfully, they are exhibiting an equity mindset by ensuring their actions are creating equitable opportunities for students.

Are educators Capacity Builders for Equity? The NTPPS state an effective teacher "builds and sustains a relationship with each student that results in an accessible learning environment of trust, mutual respect, and support."

By ensuring students could be successful during the COVID-19 pandemic, educators were building capacity for equity in their school.

What does it look like when educators are Champions for Equity? The NTPPS state an effective teacher "uses all students' abilities, cultural norms, and personal, family, and community experiences to prepare for differentiated, relevant, and rigorous instruction."

If practices reflect this work in the roles educators play daily, educators are championing equity in their school.

Resources for Educators

The NTPPS makes visible for each educator the roles they play to ensure equity for each student. More information about the advocacy roles can be found at:

nebraskaeducationvision.com/roles

The NDE and its partners are committed to leading and supporting all Nebraskans in learning, earning and living. The NTPPS demonstrate necessary shifts toward consistency in expectations. As Nebraska learns from the silver linings of pandemic change, these standards serve as an anchor of excellence and a direction for COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 instruction and school leadership.

You can find a link to the Educator Effectiveness site at:

www.education.ne.gov/educatoreffectiveness

The Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards were approved by the Nebraska State Board of Education in April 2020. The standards are available at:

cdn.education.ne.gov

As director of Statewide Teacher and Principal Support, Dr. Kim Snyder works closely with Educational Service Units, institutes of Higher Education, and other educational partners, as well as with districts themselves, to provide statewide systems of support and development that ensure equitable access to effective teachers and principals for each student in Nebraska.

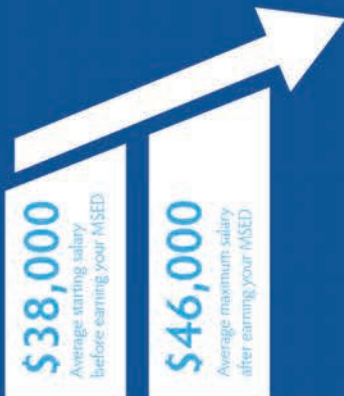
As part of a new and unique partnership, Dr. Julie Downing, a professional learning specialist at ESU No. 13, will support NDE in the development and implementation of the newly revised Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards.

As the Nebraska Leadership and Learning Network (NLLN) specialist, Ryan Ricenbaw collaborates with the office of Statewide Teacher and Principal Support to maximize the value and influence of school principals. The NLLN is charged with designing a framework of support to build critical equity-driven leadership skills as outlined in the Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards.

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Three Bills Part of Lobby Day

More than 50 people joined virtually Feb. 22 for the annual NSEA-Retired Governance/Lobby Day. Jason Hayes, NSEA Director of Public Policy and Legislative Research, reviewed various legislative bills of special interest to educators and retirees.

Guest speakers included Sens. Lynne Walz and Jen Day. The group congratulated Sen. Walz on her role as chair of the Legislature's Education Committee and listened as she shared her goals for education.

Participants also welcomed new senator Jen Day and learned of her efforts and expertise. They divided into breakout rooms to share thoughts on legislation and methods for visiting with senators.

Retired members focused their visits with senators on three key subjects:

- In support of LB64, offered by Omaha Sen. Brett Lindstrom, which would phase out the state income tax on Social Security over a five-year period. Nebraska is one of only six states that taxes Social Security. NSEA-Retired played a key role in the bill's proposal.

- Against LRC22CA, which would place a 'lid on kids' in the state constitution if passed by the legislature and approved by voters at the next general election. LR22CA, and a companion, LB408, would limit the annual increase in property taxes by every Nebraska political subdivision. NSEA also opposes LB408, which would place the lid limits in state statute.

- In support of LB641, which would require Education Support Professionals to be paid during a time of epidemic. A 1919 statute requires teachers to be paid during epidemics. Some ESP positions in Nebraska were cut at the start of COVID-19 closures.

— De Tonack,
NSEA-Retired President



Walz



Day

Former Board Member Livens Up Cornfields

Art Tanderup, former NSEA-Retired and NEA board member, is using his farm skills to create beauty in fields around the country.

Working with California aerial artist John Quigley, landowners and other farmers, Art assisted with the plotting and plowing of two crop art field pieces last fall, one in Iowa and one in a 50-acre field in Wisconsin.

"The Wisconsin effort was about healing the division in the country," Quigley, who designed the piece, said. "In such a divided time, stepping back to remember we're all in this together is important."

"When it comes to crop art—etching a design in an empty farm field using heavy machinery—there's no room for error," Tanderup said.

Before the Wisconsin field, they designed a 37-acre campaign sign in Iowa.

"It's quite a complicated procedure, but yet we've had beautiful success with all six of them," Tanderup said.

Tanderup was previously involved in crop art



Finding His Art: Past NSEA-Retired board member Art Tanderup stands in a corn field with his wife, Helen. Art helps create crop murals to advocate against potentially harmful policies.

when farmers, ranchers and tribal nations came together to oppose the Keystone XL pipeline. The art pictured below is on an 80-acre field and calls for clean energy instead of oil pipelines. The farm has been in Art and Helen Tanderup's family for generations, and for the past five years has been used to restore the Ponca Tribe's sacred corn to the indigenous people's ancestral homeland, following a 137-year absence.

The Tribe's forced removal from their lands by the U.S. government along the "Trail of Tears" route crossed what is now the Tanderup farm.

The Ponca Sacred Corn was certified by the USDA and is a significant cultural resource. Last summer, the Tanderups signed a deed returning the ancestral tribal land back to the Ponca Nation.



Crop art designed by John Quigley. Photo by Tom Simmons/Spectral Q.

Have you started a new adventure or hobby? Share details with us by sending your story to NSEA-Retired President De Tonack at:
dtonack@neb.rr.com

Don't Miss Retired's Spring Conference

Gear up your computer or tablet and plan to join the NSEA-Retired spring conference. The April 22 conference will be held online because of COVID-19 and is open to all NSEA-Retired members.

The morning session will include a virtual behind-the-scenes tour of the Lincoln Children's Zoo, presented by Zoo President and CEO John Chapo. The zoo has expanded over the past couple of years and is now open year-round.

Attendees will then hear from the Lincoln

Yoga Center about the TAKE 5 program, addressing the need for a holistic approach to childhood mental wellness in schools and giving students an effective way to quell inner turmoil in just five minutes.

Breakout rooms and a session about I Love Public Schools' recent work will round out the conference.

Registration details for the conference are available online. To register or for more information, go to:

nsea.org/retired

UNL Seeks K-12 Nominees for McAuliffe Award

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

McAuliffe and six others died in the 1986 explosion of the Challenger Space Shuttle. She was the first teacher in space. Her courage was evident in her willingness to board the shuttle and in her fierce defense of what and how she would teach from space.

To honor her courage and her memory, Dr. Gregg Wright, associate professor at UNL’s Center on Children, Family and the Law, established the Nebraska McAuliffe Prize for Courage and Excellence in Education in 1986 in conjunction with the University

of Nebraska Foundation.

The annual prize honors one courageous Nebraska K-12 teacher with a \$1,000 prize and plaque.

The winning teacher will be announced at Administrator Days in July, commemorating the 35th year of the honor.

Nominations are due by Thursday, April 15. Supporting materials must be submitted by Saturday, May 15.

To nominate a colleague for the Nebraska McAuliffe Prize for Courage and Excellence in Education, go to:

<http://courage.unl.edu>

Mental Health Conference set for June 2-3

The Nebraska School Mental Health Initiative promotes strong mental health services in schools, resources and training to increase access and early intervention and services for youth and families.

The Nebraska School Mental Health Initiative was originated by the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska, which concluded its three-year focus in 2017 with the School Mental Health Summit. The initiative is being led by steering committee partners with Educational Service Unit 3 and The Kim Foundation through at least 2021.

The 2021 Nebraska School Mental Health Conference will be held virtually on Wednesday, June 2, and Thursday, June 3. Registration costs \$50 per person with 7.75 CEUs offered.

Attendees will hear from dynamic speakers and more than 50 local mental health experts.

For more information and to register, go to:

www.thekimfoundation.org/nebraska-school-mental-health

Learn Tips and Tricks for Teacher of the Year Apps

April Webinars Free to NSEA Members

Are you planning to apply to become Nebraska’s next Teacher of the Year? Want to nominate a colleague for the honor? Get some insight into the application process at an April 27th **Tips and Tricks for TOY Applicants** webinar.

The session will begin at 7:30 p.m. and is geared toward NSEA members interested in nominating or applying for Nebraska Teacher of the Year.

A panel of past Nebraska Teachers of the Year from 2000 to present will lead the discussion on what the award is, its importance and some general considerations for applying/nominating.

NSEA is fast becoming your best source for professional development. Check this list of opportunities on a regular basis for seminars that assist members in meeting classroom needs, personal care and education technology issues. Sessions are one hour, unless

noted, and all times are central time. To learn more, or to register, go to:

www.nsea.org/webinars

Membership/Association Workshops

■ Tuesday, April 13, 5:30 p.m.: **NEA Member Benefits Overview.** Learn more about the value of membership. Exclusive deals and discounts for members.

■ Thursday, April 15, 5 p.m.: **Lifestage Investing.** A discussion around saving for the long term, identifying retirement income sources and gaps, and important information about the long-lasting financial impact of the Social Security and health care decisions you need to make when you get close to retirement. Presented by Security Benefit.

■ Tuesday, April 27, 7:30 p.m.: **Tips and Tricks for TOY Applicants.** Hear from a panel of past Nebraska Teachers of the Year and learn about the application/nomination process.

Financial Goals to Strive for Before Retirement

Everyone looks forward to the day they can retire. But there’s a difference in retiring with confidence and retiring with worry about your financial situation. Consider setting these money goals to achieve before the big day.

■ Have enough saved to cover six months of expenses. You’ve probably been putting away money in retirement accounts or paying toward your pension for a long period of time, but you shouldn’t neglect having a reserve of cash around for emergencies or other unexpected expenses while you’re heading into retirement. Having money immediately available in a personal account keeps you from having to try to hurriedly arrange withdrawals from retirement accounts that may be less liquid. You want your retirement account withdrawals to be well planned, as there may be taxes owed on that money.

■ Pay off your home. Home mortgage expenses can take a big chunk out of your fixed monthly retirement income. If possible, pay off your mortgage before you retire. That way, you may be able to stretch your budget for the retirement activities you want to enjoy.

■ Pay off credit cards. Paying off credit cards with high balances and high fees is a no-brainer, as those payments sap money from your fixed monthly retirement income. You don’t want your leisure time strapped to monthly payments, so eliminate credit card debt before you retire, and try to make sure you don’t incur more while in retirement.

■ Have enough in retirement accounts to provide 80 percent of your pre-retirement income. As a general rule of thumb, you’ll want to have enough saved for retirement to provide income equal to about 80 percent of your pre-retirement income times the number of years you expect to be retired. That may be a long time, since many retirees live into their 90s. Social Security (if you qualify) and other income sources may also factor into your total income amounts.

Information provided by Horace Mann Educators Corporation. This information is for general purposes only and should not be considered an individualized recommendation or personalized investment or tax advice.

Voice Behind Magazine, Koontz, Retires

Deadlines for NSEA's *The Voice* are now being met by Assistant Director of Communications Emily Hemphill, just the third NSEA publication editor since 1962. Hemphill takes over from Al Koontz, who retired at the end of March.

Hemphill previously was managing editor of the Seward Newspaper Group where she coordinated coverage for weekly newspapers in Seward, Crete, Wilber, Milford and Friend. She worked as an editor and reporter for the Seward and Milford newspapers, and as an education reporter for the Beatrice Daily Sun.

Hemphill was named the 2018 Outstanding Young Nebraska Journalist of the Year by the Nebraska Press Association. Her work earned multiple awards in the NPA annual contest between 2015 and 2020.

Hemphill will oversee nine issues of *The Voice* each year, along with the Member Services Guide that arrives each July. She also serves on NSEA's Delegate Assembly and Government Relations teams.

A Seward County native, Hemphill is a graduate of Centennial High School and Concordia University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in journalism and



Hemphill

public relations.

Koontz joined the NSEA staff in February 1995 after 18 years in the newspaper business, with stops in Hastings, Beatrice, Seward and Lincoln.

Under his watch, *The Voice* was honored multiple times as Best Magazine by the State Education Editors (SEE) – now known as State Education Association Communicators (SEAC) – comprised of more than 120 state association communications staffers. He also received numerous Best News Story and Best Feature Story awards over the years.

Koontz was SEE president in 2006 and led the organization's annual conference that year in Philadelphia. In 2010, he was honored as SEE Editor of the Year.

Koontz is from Kearney and is a 1976 graduate of then-Kearney State College, now the University of Nebraska at Kearney. With wife Mary Kay, he resides in Lincoln and will focus on seven grandchildren, family history, woodworking and a growing stack of books.

Koontz followed Conrad Good Sr., editor of NSEA publications from 1962 to 1995. Founded in 1867, NSEA has provided a publication for members since 1872.



Koontz

Langlois Joins as NSEA Organizer

Thanks to a grant from the NEA, the NSEA has gained a new staff member through January 2022. Brandon Langlois will work with all local education association members to organize around special issues.

A graduate of Omaha North High School, Langlois has been organizing in Nebraska since 2014, when he worked to raise Nebraska's minimum wage. Prior to that, he worked at the Department of Health and Human Services and was a member of NAPE-AFSCME Local 61.

Since then, he has worked on the campaigns of many other ballot issues and on behalf of candidates. In 2018, he was the campaign manager for Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh and then served as her legislative aide from 2019 to 2020. He currently lives in Lincoln with his fiancée, a paraeducator in Lincoln Public Schools, and their cats. Members can reach Langlois at (402) 319-5456.



Langlois

ESPs at NEA Event; Sheehy, TeSelle, Kral Remembered

Eight NSEA members took part in the March 19-21 NEA Education Support Professional National Conference along with 2,000 other ESPs from around the U.S.

The conference is the top professional development opportunity for ESPs and was virtual for the first time. The conference goal is to grow and strengthen the professional excellence of ESPs working in Pre-K to higher education. The event included nearly three dozen interactive workshops and 15 pre-recorded sessions on building community relationships, organizing and advocating for educators.

Members attending were **Travis Vo, Westside Education Association** and the ESP representative on the NSEA Board of Directors; **Karen Wheatley, Plattsmouth Education Association**; **Alicia Hernandez-Anguiano, Omaha Education Association**; **Brenda Alt, Shelby Education Association**; and **South Sioux City Education Association** members **Jenny Wood, Teresa Chappellear, Keli Bright** and **Lisa Nicely**. NSEA staff and leaders who attended the conference were **President Jenni Benson, NEA Director Linda Freye**; and **Organizational Specialists Judy Roach and Jen Dubas**.



Sheehy

Sheehy, TeSelle, Kral Pass

Rose Sheehy, well-known in Omaha educational circles and beyond, died in Omaha Feb. 22. She was 77.

Called the "consummate volunteer" and a "teacher's teacher" by friends, Sheehy taught lower elementary grades for the Omaha Public Schools beginning in 1966 until her retirement in 2003. She served on nearly every Association committee in the past 40 years.

Sheehy was a past president of NSEA's Metro District and served on the NSEA Board of Directors from 1985 to 1994. She was a past negotiator for the Omaha Education Association, past president of the OEA Manor Board of Trustees and a member of the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education.

Long-time association leader **Eugene "Gene" Lawrence TeSelle** died at Tekamah

on Feb. 15 at age 79.

He was a graduate of Cortland High and Dana College and began teaching science at Tekamah-Herman in 1963, where he started the school's wrestling program. TeSelle held every position in the local association and served on the NSEA Metro District Board of Directors. He was a 48-year member of the Tekamah Fire Department. As a certified EMT instructor, he delivered four babies. He was a lifetime NSEA member, and was father of former NSEA accounting department staffer **Tricia Martis**.

Retired NSEA member **E.A. Kral**, Wilber, died Jan. 22 at age 85.

Kral taught in Lincoln and then California before 26 years teaching English at Grand Island Senior High School.

Kral is also known for research that resulted in his 900 Famous Nebraskans document, first hosted on the NSEA website. That research, featuring biographies of famous Nebraskans, was later turned into "Nationally Distinguished Nebraskans: A Bio-Bibliography of More Than 900 Individuals From 1854 to 2012." With his own funds, Kral published his research in book form and sent a copy to more than 800 school and public libraries statewide.

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“It’s time for teachers to dispel the rumors about education. We must be willing to stand publicly and say, ‘There are good things going on in our schools.’”

— **Michael Marks,**
a Mississippi teacher, 1995

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

Sellers Joins NSEA U for July 13-15 Sessions

Bakari Sellers made history in 2006 when, at age 22, he defeated a 26-year incumbent to become the youngest member of the South Carolina legislature and the youngest African American elected official in the nation.

Sellers will be a featured speaker at this year’s NSEA University in July at the University of Nebraska Innovation Campus in Lincoln. Also planned are an address by humorist Gerry Brooks and a tour of the Lincoln Children’s Zoo.

Bakari Sellers

Sellers holds an undergraduate degree from Morehouse College and a law degree from the University of South Carolina. He has worked to address issues ranging from education and poverty to preventing domestic violence and childhood obesity.

He was named to TIME Magazine’s 40 Under 40 list in 2010, as well as the 2014 and 2015 “The Root 100” lists of the nation’s most influential African-Americans. He plans to release his first book, “My Vanishing Country,” in May and is a political commentator on CNN.

Sellers will join members via Zoom during the Tuesday, July 13, luncheon for a presentation and Q&A session.

Gerry Brooks

Educational humorist Gerry Brooks will take center



Sellers



Brooks



stage during the Thursday, July 15, lunch. Brooks, a full-time elementary school principal in Lexington, Kentucky, has parlayed short, humorous videos into internet sensation status by drawing on his experiences as a classroom teacher and intervention specialist. He shares his thoughts on Flair Pens, Smarkers, Carpet Time and more. He has written two books: “Go See the Principal: True Tales from the School Trenches” and “If You Give a Teacher an Assignment.”

Lincoln Zoo Tour

Tuesday, July 13, will feature an evening reception and NSEA U-only tour of the Lincoln Children’s Zoo. The zoo opened in the summer of 1965 and now includes more than 400 animals and a miniature railroad. It is home to more than 40 endangered species and most recently added giraffes and a red panda to its ranks. The endangered Sumatran tiger and threatened Galapagos turtle also reside at the zoo.

NSEA U offerings for 2021 continue to develop. If you would like to be among the presenters, submit your idea at:

<https://bit.ly/nseau-rfp>

For details, see future editions of *The Voice* or:
nsea.org/nseau

Ag Sack Lunch Program Teaches Ag, Feeds Students

The 11th annual Ag Sack Lunch Program heads into the spring semester offering schools the option of either virtual or in-person presentations as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the nation’s educational systems. The popular program is designed to increase agriculture awareness among Nebraska fourth-graders and their families.

For fourth-grade classes that are able to make the trip to Lincoln to visit the State Capitol, the program provides free sack lunches to the students while they listen to a short presentation about agriculture in Nebraska. The sessions are led by “Ag Ambassadors,” students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agriculture. Students at schools opting

for virtual presentations also hear about the importance of agriculture to Nebraska’s economy.

“We are pleased that we’ve been able to resume offering in-person presentations

for classes that are coming to Lincoln,” said Karen Brokaw, Ag Sack Lunch Program coordinator. “Of course, we practice social distancing and the wearing of masks during those in-person sessions.”

According to Brokaw, the program continues to receive accolades from teachers, including those who have participated in the



virtual presentations during the pandemic.

Ashland-Greenwood teacher Elsielynn Busenitz praised the virtual presentation that her class enjoyed in February.

“My students were engaged and were provided many opportunities to engage with the speaker,” Busenitz said. “The information was interesting and well presented to the students so that they were interested and understood it.”

The Ag Sack Lunch Program is sponsored by the Nebraska Corn Board, the Nebraska Soybean Board, the Nebraska Pork Producers Association, Nebraska Beef Council, Midwest Dairy and Nebraska Poultry Industries.

For more information, call Brokaw at (402) 432-2299.