

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • December 2021

STAFF SHORTAGE: A front-row seat

**Guinan fills role as
Executive Director**

**NSEA District seats
up for election**

**EHA rates
set for 2022**



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Guinan fills role as next NSEA Executive Director

Former Executive Director Fennell steps down to care for family's health needs

Nebraska State Education Association Executive Director Maddie Fennell has stepped down for family health reasons and the NSEA Board has named its Director of Advocacy, Trish Guinan, as her replacement.



Guinan

Guinan, a 43-year member of the NSEA, who taught mathematics at the secondary and college levels, began her association work as a field representative for members in 1996, becoming Director of Member Rights in 2000, and Director of Advocacy in 2012.

Fennell, a National Board Certified Teacher and the 2007 Nebraska Teacher of the Year, served as NSEA Executive Director since 2017.

"I am very grateful for the faith that the Board of Directors and our NSEA members have placed in me during my time as executive director," Fennell said. "Unfortunately, the continued health needs of my husband, my son and other members of my family require more attention than I can give while also fully executing the responsibilities of executive director. I have been a member of the NSEA since 1986, and I will continue my support of the important work done by the incredible members, leadership and staff of the

Association."

"The Board and I were saddened to hear of the personal reasons behind Maddie's desire to step down, and we wish her and her family the very best for the future," said Jenni Benson, NSEA president. "I know our members join me in thanking Maddie for her service to the Association. She has been a strong advocate for children, public school employees and our public schools."

"The Board's selection of Trish Guinan as the new executive director means a smooth transition in which we will not miss a beat in advocating for and supporting our members. This is particularly important given the challenging time educators and education support professionals are facing with the pandemic and all the issues surrounding it. Trish brings significant expertise and experience in working for our members and with school district officials to address these concerns."

While teaching, Guinan also served as the Fremont Public Schools Staff Development Coordinator. Prior to joining NSEA as a staff member, Guinan was a building representative, negotiator, vice president and president for the Fremont Education Association. She also served as vice president of NSEA's Metro District Board of Directors and was a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly and the NSEA Delegate Assembly.

Would you like to write for The Voice?

Would you like to write for *The Voice*? Perhaps a column or an article on what is working in your classroom? Submissions can be classroom-related, humorous, inspiring or otherwise education-related. Submit your questions and your topics to thevoice@nsea.org.

On the Cover: Veteran teacher and NSEA member Mark Gudgel explores the implications of staff shortages in schools – an ongoing problem exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Read more about how the problem is affecting educators and students on page 7.

Dare to combat the ever-flowing 'firehose of falsehoods'



**NSEA
President
Jenni Benson**

“

We have a firehose of information sprayed at us on a daily basis. Educators and public education are being falsely portrayed using partial truths and outright fiction. We need to combat propaganda with truth and your voice.

”

I remember sitting in a circle playing the game “Telephone” when I was much younger.

A group of friends sat in a circle. One person started by whispering a message in the next person’s ear. As they whispered the message around the circle, the original message became skewed and sometimes unrecognizable. The final person then spoke aloud what they heard, usually to a loud response of laughter. It was a game of fun.



Now the “game” of telephone is played out daily through text messages, media, social media, emails and more. Unfortunately, there isn’t a lot to laugh about.

Instead, there is divisive misinformation being spread through many avenues. It is not a game, it is reality. It is unfortunately becoming more negative, and increasingly, the truth does not seem to matter.

I am sure each of you can instantly think of a whisperstorm of rumors and misinformation that goes around your workplace, filtering through your friends and communities.

As part of my leadership journey, I recently attended the first NEA in-person conference since February 2020 for state leaders and management. It was so good to network with other state leaders. The issues discussed were similar throughout the nation. We can always learn from each other.

We heard a presentation about messaging. The speaker told of “The Firehose of Falsehood.” It was a powerful message.

We have a firehose of information sprayed at us on a daily basis. Educators and public education are being falsely portrayed using

partial truths and outright fiction. We need to combat propaganda with truth and your voice.

What can we do to quell the misinformation? What example are we setting for our children?

What do we need to do to stop the firehose of falsehoods?

We are all learning, educating and messaging every day. As the leader of NSEA, I continue to learn and educate a wide audience. I am

currently reading and studying “Dare to Lead” by Brené Brown. It is a down-to-earth approach to leading on any level.

Brown shares Theodore Roosevelt’s quote, “It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat...who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly...”

I know you are all in the arena each day, daring greatly despite the critics. I can never express my appreciation enough for all you are doing for our students and communities.

NSEA is here to continue to support you. We will release our recent survey results early in December. I encourage you to share your stories and your solutions. We need your voice as we enter the new year and the upcoming legislative session.

We must continue to communicate and work together for the benefit of all children and all educators.

It's getting chilly...

Do your students have what they need?

Nebraska winters can make even the most warmly dressed children shiver. Imagine walking to school in the biting cold of the early morning without a coat or warm mittens, or with shoes that are falling apart. Unfortunately, this is a reality for many Nebraska children.



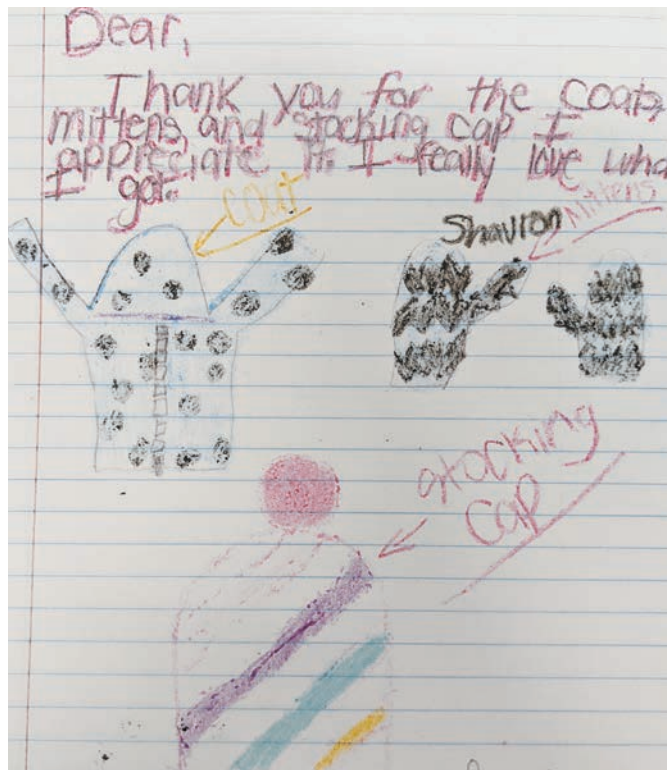
That's why the NSEA created the Children's Fund 27 years ago. The fund is a resource for teachers to be able to help their students get what they need to stay warm – or to fulfill other needs for students: eye glasses, public bus passes to get to school, clean clothes to wear, food to eat, shoes without holes in them...the list goes on.

All of these add up to a more successful learner who can focus on school instead of a rumbling tummy, headaches from eye strain or freezing fingers and toes.

To access the Children's Fund for a student in need, call 1-800-742-0047 or go to nsea.org/childrensfund to learn more.

All requests are handled discreetly and confidentially. Recipients are never identified or disclosed.

Contributions to the Children's Fund are tax-deductible, and every penny goes to help children – administrative costs are paid from the NSEA budget. Local associations are encouraged to host fundraisers and challenge other associations to contribute to the fund to help students who need it.



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Encourage relaxation, self-care for educators

NSEA offers R-Cubed room kit for rejuvenation, revitalization

The school environment can be stressful at times, and educators have been stretched thin the last year and a half. Educators need time and space to relax both during their time off, but also during school day breaks.

NSEA offers the R-Cubed kit, available for check-out from NSEA staff, for local associations to use in their school buildings.

The goal is to create a physical setting that provides support for teachers and staff who might be experiencing secondary trauma or stress. The kit may be checked out for up to two weeks.

The kit includes:

- relaxing music pre-loaded on MP3 players, with earbuds for staff to keep;
- two lamps;
- two electric massage chair pads;
- two small throw blankets;
- healthy snacks;
- a notebook of resources that includes templates and examples of posters, flyers and other notes to inform staff, online mindfulness resources, and handouts on yoga stretches and mindful activities; and
- an inflatable exercise ball with manual pump.

The school or local association should provide a room in the school building, cleared of clutter and arranged in a manner that creates a calming and welcoming environment. Windows should be covered as much



Take a load off: The R-Cubed kit is designed to outfit a room with massage pads, comfortable blankets, low lighting, snacks and relaxing music so teachers and staff can take time out to relax and refresh.

as possible to provide privacy. A table should be available for snacks and water. Bulletin boards should be covered with paper or cloth. Lamps can be used to create subtle lighting with low-wattage or colored bulbs. Comfortable chairs should be provided in the room.

Locals could also arrange for a massage therapist or manicurist to be on site (consider partnering with an area spa, physical therapy clinic or massage/cosmetology college). Aroma therapy, such as infusers, could be offered, depending on district policy.



Staff members should be allowed to use the R-Cubed room during their plan time, lunch break or other free periods during the school day.

NSEA staff, along with local leaders or building representatives, will set up the room, keep it cleaned, refill snacks and tear down the room when finished. Ideally, the school district will have a role as well, such as providing water or other drinks.

For more information or to check out the kit for your school, contact your NSEA organizational specialist or call 1-800-742-0047.

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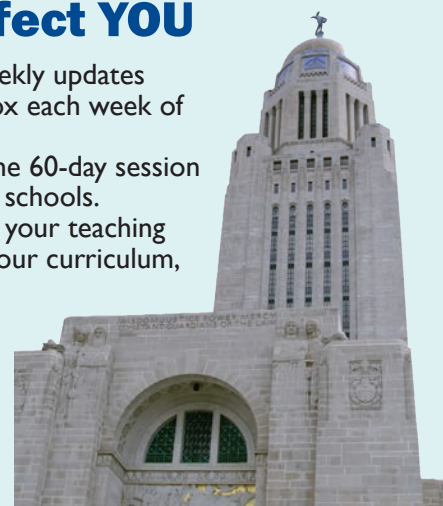
Stay up-to-date with legislative decisions that affect public education. Receive weekly updates about legislative activity in NSEA's Capitol Update, sent to your personal email inbox each week of the legislative session.

The 107th Nebraska Legislature will convene for its second session in January. The 60-day session is expected to cover a wide range of proposed bills that will affect Nebraska public schools.

Every decision made regarding 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 all tied to the legislature.

NSEA's Government Relations team monitors legislative activities and advocates for the best interests of our members and students. Bills change quickly throughout the session, and NSEA wants to keep you in the loop about how your job as an educator may be affected.

Subscribe to the Capitol Update at www.nsea.org/subscriber.





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The greatest threat to education

Staff shortages impose grim reality on schools in Nebraska, nationwide

by Dr. Mark Gudgel

By November, when the sun rises later – long after I’ve arrived at school each morning – most days I no longer bother to tie a necktie or even button up a shirt, reverting instead to polo shirts or, on Fridays, even more casual attire.

This isn’t necessarily how I want to dress as a teacher, but it becomes a necessary act: the sparing of precious time and the conservation of critical energy that I know I’ll need later in the day when I am asked, or rather, told, that I will be teaching German, Statistics, Robotics or Personal Finance.

I am an English teacher, but so far this school year I’ve “taught” Physics, Geometry, American History, Algebra, Spanish and countless other classes – none of which I’m even remotely qualified to teach. (Last week, the lesson plan for a Human Growth and Development class was titled “The dangers of sexual activity,” and you’re damn right that I nearly walked right back out.)

By November, I’d covered 20 different classes already this year, and that’s far fewer than many of my colleagues whose plan periods fall on the last block of the day when teachers – especially coaches like me – are more likely to be gone. By the time you read this in early December, the number could easily have doubled, but I’ll have given up on counting.

Very little of what I have to say on this topic is likely to qualify as new information for most readers of *The Voice*. And yet I think many of our buildings and districts feel as if they exist largely in isolation from one another. My hope is that sharing my experiences, outlining this problem as I understand it, and suggesting what I consider to be an almost obvious solution, may help some colleagues be better able to do similarly, and also to remind you that you are not alone. Every time I speak to teachers about this issue, the commonalities of what we face each day is reinforced for me, and so I write this in solidarity with teachers and educational professionals across our state and well beyond.



Out of his element: Dr. Mark Gudgel teaches English. So far this school year, he also has “taught” Physics, Geometry, American History, Algebra, Spanish and a handful of other subjects because of a lack of teaching staff in his Omaha school. Districts across the nation are facing these staff shortages linked to a number of factors driving educators out of the profession.

The teach...er...staff shortage

I remember back in teachers’ college at UNL, all the rumblings about the looming shortage in our profession. Then I remember graduating, not immediately finding work, and wondering if perhaps the rumors had been blown out of proportion.

Instead, it seems, the play just took a little longer to develop than some had initially suspected. The reality today is grim. The average career of a teacher is said to last five years, while the rate of retirement seems to far exceed the number of people entering the profession.

Many, if not most, of our schools are not staffed at 100%. Not only did the teacher shortage eventually arrive, but now that I have a front row seat from which to view it, it is far worse than anything I could have imagined as an undergrad.

As if this weren’t enough, the problem is compounded exponentially by the fact that the shortage is in no way limited to teachers. Across the country, as right here in Nebraska, we find that schools do not have enough bus drivers to get kids to school on time, enough cafeteria workers to keep them fed, enough security to keep them safe, or enough custodians to keep facilities

clean and operational.

A story from Texas got my attention last week: a group of fathers began serving as additional security at their kids’ school, and it had a profoundly positive impact on building culture. While the story is certainly touching, it does little in the way of offering a tenable solution that could effectively be implemented on a nationwide scale. The most obvious and painful shortage, however, is that of substitute teachers.

The issue of coverage

Coverage is essentially the act of being volun-told that you’ll teach an absent colleague’s class during your plan period because a substitute teacher was not available. This information is typically delivered day-of, sometimes mere minutes before the class begins.

I have spoken with teachers across the country about this issue, and it’s rare that I encounter someone who has yet to have this experience. Coverage looks a little different depending on where you are, but it often plays out something like this:

■ **Step One:** Arrive at your school, enthusiastic, optimistic, and ready to improve the lives of young people.

■ **Step Two:** Get an email or a note informing you that in addition to your

own job you'll also be doing someone else's during the time that had previously been set aside for you to plan lessons, grade papers, call parents, meet with students, and pee.

■ Step Three: Arrive in an unfamiliar classroom and attempt to deliver a lesson in a content area you have never studied to children with whom you have little or no rapport.

■ Step Four: Contemplate quitting your job each time this happens.

■ Step Five: Do it all over again tomorrow.

The shortage of substitute teachers is the issue that contributes most directly to this problem, which I would speculate may be the thing driving more teachers out of our profession than any other single factor.

The number of substitutes who are available and willing to work in a pandemic has understandably dwindled, but there's no reason to believe that when the pandemic one day ends the shortage will be resolved. In fact, the pandemic may have been the tipping point for many substitute teachers, but the crux of the issue for subs is the same as it is for full-time educators.

Put simply, we cannot proceed to require educators, full-time or substitute, to be *educated* as professionals and to *conduct themselves* as professionals while simultaneously refusing to *compensate* them as professionals. An article published on the NEA webpage in October provides a solid overview of the problem, while the comments section bolsters the argument that this issue is indeed nationwide (www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/substitute-teacher-shortage-causes-more-school-disruptions).

Why is coverage such a threat?

At the heart of the issue is the depressing reality that when we force teachers to cover like this on a regular basis, we deprive them of their ability to do their own jobs at the highest level.

When I cover during my plan period, the papers I was going to grade and the timely feedback I hoped to provide get pushed aside. My lessons don't get planned, so I don't teach as well as I could have otherwise. I miss IEP meetings that were scheduled around my plan time. I can't meet with students to talk about their issues, help them apply for scholarships or assist them with their homework, nor can I call their parents to tell them about the amazing thing they said in class that day or the terrific work they're doing.

Coverage makes us worse teachers in ways that are painfully obvious to our well-trained eyes, and as a direct result, it shortens our longevity in the field. Teachers are proud and talented artists, and education is the bedrock of our society. We know what amazing teaching looks like and how important it is. If the current state of affairs won't allow us to be excellent at our jobs, it can cause us to wonder where else we might be better able to flourish.

Based on countless conversations with colleagues and peers, I suspect that the coverage epidemic is responsible for more retirements and resignations from teaching than any other single factor in recent history.

In light of all of this, I don't think it's hyperbolic at all to suggest that we may well be witnessing the slow death of education, a system burning to the ground before our eyes. The already crushing teacher shortage has been juxtaposed next to shortages of all other school staff in such a way that it leaves us unable to be effective, constantly scrambling, always behind and evacuating the profession as if it were a house ablaze.

But there is hope.

How can we fix this – and what if we don't?

I want to emphasize that this is not an issue specific to my school, nor to my district. In fact, despite Gov. Ricketts' best attempts to undermine public education at every turn, this isn't even a Nebraska-Nice problem. Rather, the issue is at least nationwide, though I hear enough credible grumblings from friends in Europe and Africa to believe that perhaps it extends well beyond our national boundaries.

In my building, it is not at all uncommon for our principal to cover classes, nor is it out of the ordinary to see her manning the front security desk or providing extra supervision in our crowded hallways at critical times. I admire and respect her and our many other administrators who, though they could plausibly find excuses not to be a part of the solution, nevertheless help shoulder a burden of staff shortages which seems only to grow more and more immense with every passing day.

In the end, however, adding every administrator in the building to the coverage rotation only succeeds in applying a bandage to a wound that we all realize by now is going to require major surgery. To borrow a line from Lin Manuel, "If there's a fire you're trying to douse, you can't put it out from inside the house."

The good news, at least in my opinion, is that this is one of the few problems in the world that can be solved, at least in large part, with money – assuming we can get those outside the burning house to agree to adequately fund the fire brigade.

Pay substitute teachers, pay custodians, security, cafeteria workers, bus drivers and other vital school personnel a livable wage with real benefits, and we might be able to put this fire out before the house comes down entirely.

Despite the immense cost and difficulty of earning a Juris Doctorate, there is zero risk of the world ever running out of lawyers. If we want to save public education, then simply put, teachers and school staff must be as well compensated as are those in the professions we have prepared them to do. Then, and only then, will more of our students seriously consider pursuing the critical vocations that they see us fighting harder and harder to perform each day. (This is the part where you call your representative.)

Another day of coverage

As I sit at my desk, attempting to put to words precisely why this is such a problem and how I think we might effectively address it, Microsoft Office pings me. It's my curriculum specialist, and the subject line of the email is "Coverage." Today, instead of planning my own lessons or grading my students' responses to *Night*, I will be teaching about...let's take a look here... plants and propagation. I scan the lesson plans. Something about a tomato, looks like a video, emphasis on "no greenhouse today" – we have a greenhouse? – and then a unit assessment over the impact of photosynthesis on the climate.

A few of these terms are vaguely familiar to me, perhaps from Mr. Powell's 10th grade biology class, but for God's sake I'm an English teacher. Terrific, I think sardonically. Then I log into my calendar and block off some time to start updating my résumé.

Dr. Mark Gudgel is an 18-year veteran of teaching in Nebraska's public schools. His latest book, Think Higher Feel Deeper: Holocaust Education in the Secondary Classroom, was released by Teachers College Press this fall. Gudgel lives in Omaha with his wife and their two children.



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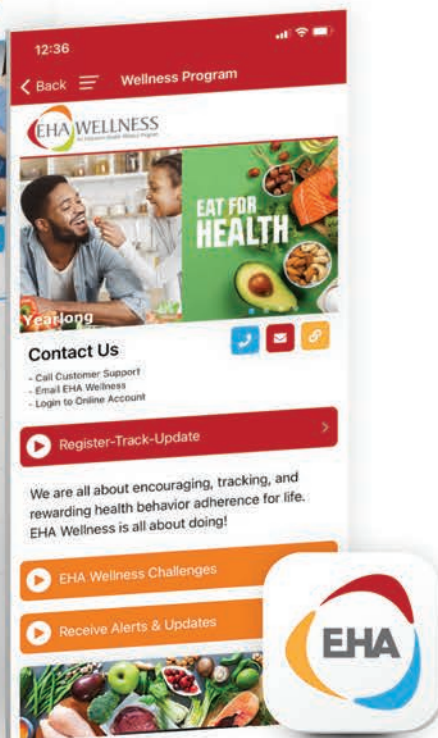
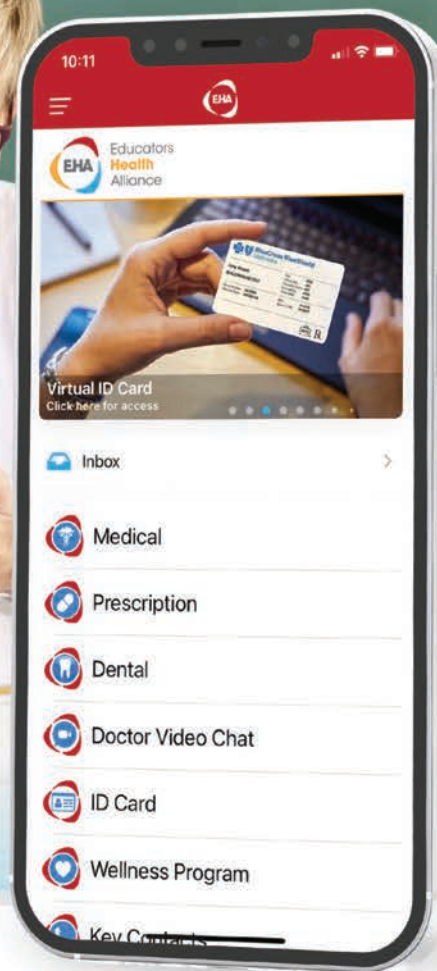
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Retirement plan nears 100% funding

Larger-than-expected return gives boost for state's three retirement systems

The system that pays school employees' retirement benefits is closer to being fully funded than previously thought. Much closer, actually, and that's great news for educators who pay into the plan, hoping to retire one day.

Though the plan has been steadily increasing its funded ratio over the past several years, a shocking yet welcome 30% return on investment among the state's three retirement systems over the last fiscal year now situates the school employees' plan at 97.41% funded, up from 91.65% funded in 2020.

A retirement plan is considered in good standing once it crosses the 80% funded threshold, meaning 80% of its liabilities are covered by its assets.

The assumed rate of return was set at 7.3%. The actual 30% return was a welcome increase. The previous year's return was just 2.4%, which set the plan at 91.65% funded in 2020.

"This is great," said Patrice Beckham, principal and consulting actuary with Cavanaugh Macdonald Consulting LLC, the firm that presented the annual review of the state's retirement system at the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Board meeting Nov. 15. "We were in a really good place a year ago, and we just got stronger."

A yearly look

The annual review looks at "a snapshot" of the state's three retirement systems as of July 1. The three systems cover judges, the state patrol and school employees.

Beckham said the numbers presented were just that: a snapshot, meaning they change from one day to the next.

The 30% return resulted in a 3.5% increase in funded ratio per system, which is a big deal in actuarial speak. It could be just a fluke, though.

"It is possible something ugly could happen to balance out that experience, but it's all very positive right now," Beckham said.

Eight years ago, following the Great Recession, the school

plan's funded ratio was 77%. Last year, it was on track to be fully funded by 2031. This year's boosted rate of return moves that time frame much closer – to 2022. That means contribution rates could be lowered or benefits could be expanded.

The judges' plan is now funded at 100.71%, and the state patrol's is at 90.5%, both up from last year.

A bright future, hopefully

Nebraska law currently requires the state to contribute a minimum of 2% of teacher salaries to the school plan each year.

Education employees are required to contribute 9.78% of their salaries, and school districts put in 9.88 percent of educators' salaries.

The state plan covers all K-12 education employees in Nebraska except for those in Omaha, where education employees are covered in a separate system that existed before this one.

The school plan is the largest of the three retirement systems, including 96,227 members either contributing to or benefitting from the plan. The state patrol follows with 967 members, and the judges with 344.

Former NSEA Board of Directors member and current PERB Chair Janis Elliott said she was surprised there weren't more educators who have left the plan in the last year, given the pandemic and staffing crises across the state. She said she will be interested to see how plan membership numbers fluctuate by next year.

If educators leave the profession en masse, Banister said funding the plan may become a challenge, as the pool of people paying in shrinks while the number of retirees receiving benefits stays the same or grows.

Beckham said investment returns, mortality rates and ages, salary increases, and retirement trends are the top factors that affect the plans.



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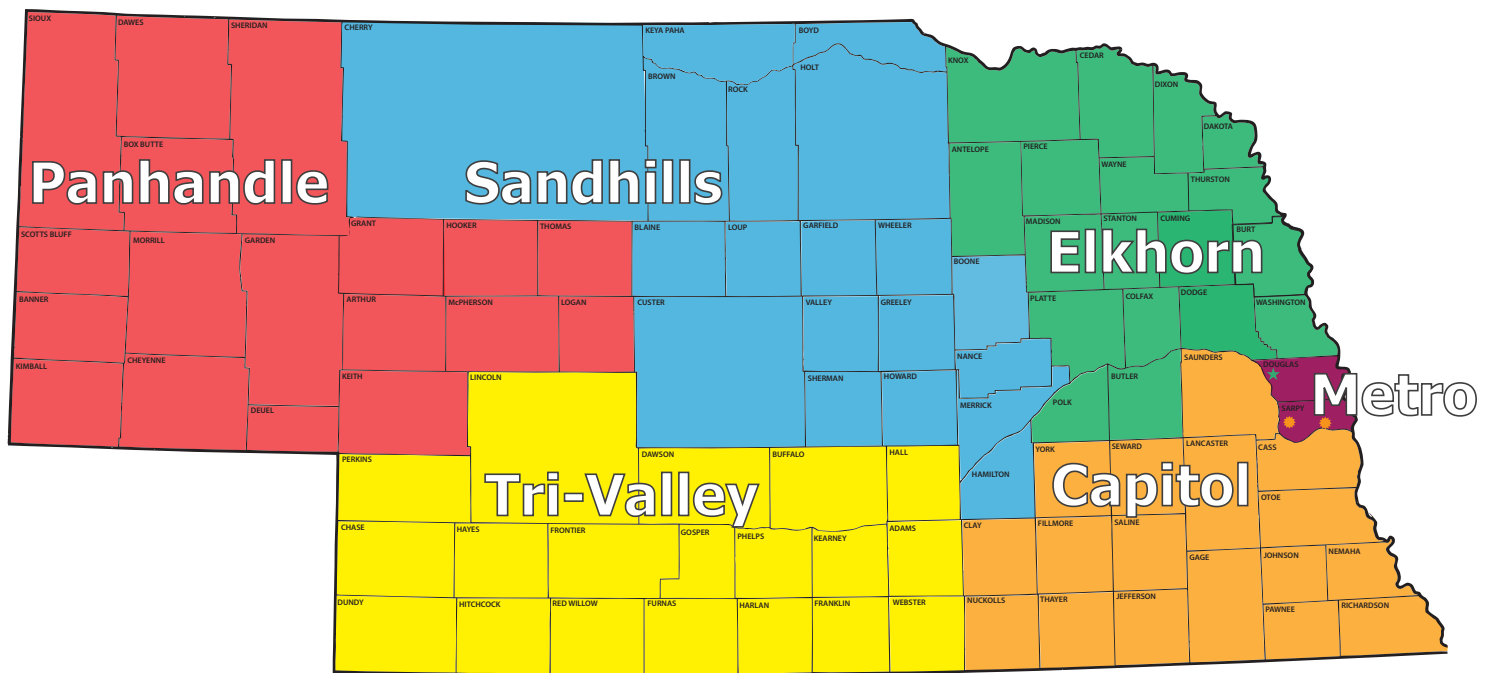
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In order to comply with NEA guidelines, the ● Gretna Education Association and ● Springfield/Platteview Education Association will be included in Capitol District, and ★ Metro Community College Education Association is included in Elkhorn District.

Your leadership needed!

Several leadership positions within NSEA will be up for election in 2022, and members are asked to consider the role they could play as a leader in the Association.

The window for filing for the 34 open elected positions on NSEA district boards and the NSEA Board of Directors will open on Saturday, Jan. 1, and will close on Sunday, Feb. 6.

Election of members as at-large delegates to NEA Representative Assembly will occur on the same timeline. Watch the January edition of *The Voice* for details on that filing process.

NSEA members will vote beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 18. Voting will close at midnight on Sunday, March 13.

To file, go to nsea.org and click on '2022 District Elections.' Select your district, and choose the office you seek.

Candidates will need their 10-digit NSEA membership number. Your number will be found above your name on

the mailing label of *The Voice*, or on the email that delivers the digital editions of *The Voice*. Call NSEA if you have questions: 1-800-742-0047.

The filing process allows candidates to post a 50-word statement for voters to read. Type the statement in a Word or other text document and then paste the statement into the appropriate box during the filing process.

NSEA encourages minorities to seek office at all levels. NSEA's Minority Involvement Plan says "It shall be the goal of the Association to seek minority representation on governing and appointive bodies at least equal to the percentage of minority membership for that appropriate level."

Alternately, candidates may mail their name, address, local association name and 50-word statement to: NSEA Elections, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. State which office you are seeking.

Required to vote: a valid email address

Members can elect the next round of NSEA leaders by casting a ballot in the Association elections.

Voting opens on Friday, Feb. 18. On that date, members with valid email addresses on file will receive an email detailing the process.

NSEA members without a valid email address on file will receive a postcard

explaining the voting. If you do not receive a postcard or an email from NSEA by Thursday, March 10, call 1-800-742-0047.

Update your e-mail address with NSEA by calling 1-800-742-0047 or sending an email to membership@nsea.org. Members should use a personal email account, not a school-issued one.

Vacancies

A statewide look at NSEA leadership opportunities for 2022-23:

ELKHORN DISTRICT

- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Four seats on executive committee
- One seat on NSEA Board

CAPITOL DISTRICT

- President
- Two seats on executive committee
- Two seats on NSEA Board

METRO DISTRICT

- President
- Vice President
- Three seats on executive committee (subdistricts 3, 6 and 9)
- Two seats on NSEA Board

PANHANDLE DISTRICT

- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Four seats on executive committee (areas 3, 5, 6 and 7)
- One seat on NSEA Board

SANDHILLS DISTRICT

- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Two seats on executive committee

TRI-VALLEY DISTRICT

- Vice President
- Two seats on executive committee (one East, one Central)
- One seat on NSEA Board

EHA approves 2022-23 rates

Insurance rates will see an overall premium increase of 5.84% next year for the medical and dental insurance plans used by nearly every Nebraska school district, following action by the Educators Health Alliance, a consortium of three statewide public school groups that manages the plan.

Medical insurance rates for active employees and retirees will increase 6.14%. Dental rates for all employees and retirees will remain unchanged from the 2021-22 rate level.

This will mark the 20th consecutive rate increase of less than 10%. The average annual increase over the past 10 years has been 4.4%.

“The COVID pandemic has resulted in significant disruption for our members,” Sheri Jablonski, EHA board chair, said. “It has also made it difficult to set rates for the 2022-23 plan year. Nevertheless, we are pleased we’ve been able to maintain our streak of 20 years without a double digit increase in rates and, especially, to average an increase of under 4.5% for the last decade.”

The benefit changes for the 2022-23 contract year include an increase in the deductible and out of pocket maximum for the \$3,600 deductible HSA plan. It will now have an in-network deductible of \$3,800 and out of pocket maximum of \$4,350. There will also be a change to the formulary used as part of the prescription drug offering. The formulary change will be implemented to achieve claim savings and increased rebates from pharmaceutical manufacturers.

“We believe it is important, particularly in these stressful times, to minimize the change in benefits to our members. We also feel the formulary change will allow us to achieve savings that can be passed on through lower rate increases,” said Jenni Benson, President of the Nebraska State Education Association.

A successful rollout of the alternate network product offering in the 2021-22 plan year to all districts in areas of the state where network competition is possible will be continued in the 2022-23 plan year.

Jablonski indicated the single digit increase in premium rates is made possible because of several factors, including:

- the impact of the EHA’s statewide wellness and health promotion program;
- a program designed to assist in the management of chronic diseases and emerging diseases;

What it means for members

Premium Rate Change

- Medical rates for all Active Employee plans will increase by 6.14%.
- Medical rates for all Early Retiree plans will increase by 6.14%.
- Dental rates for all participants will increase by 0.00%.
- The combined increase for medical and dental coverage is 5.84%.

Benefit Changes

- The \$3,600 deductible plan will increase by \$200 In-Network/\$400 Out-of-Network, bringing the deductible to \$3,800 In-Network/\$7,600 Out-of-Network. The family deductible increases to \$7,600 In-Network/\$15,200 Out-of-Network.
- The \$3,600 plan Out-of-Pocket limit will increase by \$100 In-Network/\$300 Out-of-Network, bringing the total Out-of-Pocket to \$4,350 In-Network/\$13,000 Out-of-Network. The family Out-of-Pocket increases to \$8,700 In-Network/\$26,000 Out-of-Network. This includes deductible, coinsurance, and copayments for medical and pharmacy services

Upcoming change to prescription drug plan

Starting Sept. 1, 2022, the new prescription drug list will be PDL 40. This list can be found at NebraskaBlue.com/DrugList.

- Make sure your drugs are included on PDL 40 or talk to your prescriber or pharmacist about trying an alternative.
- Contact BCBSNE using the number on the back of your member ID card with any questions.

For more information about the plan, visit ehaplan.org.

■ holding the line on health and administrative cost increases; and

■ continued prudent management in the design and choices of benefit plans.

“The EHA Wellness program has been instrumental in improving the health and wellness of plan participants,” said Beth Kernes Krause, EHA Vice Chair and Auburn Public Schools Board of Education member. “The wellness plan continues to expand, such as the recent addition of the Headspace program, and includes options for individuals and school groups to earn financial incentives for achieving goals set by the program.”

“The EHA Board understands the financial concerns of our members as well as the fiscal constraints facing school districts,” said John Spatz, executive director of the Nebraska Association of School Boards. “It is an important responsibility of the EHA Board to balance the health insurance premium increase and the benefit adjustments for both districts and individual employees and their families.”

“The EHA Board takes its responsibility for plan oversight very seriously

and we believe the rate increase and benefit decisions reached by the board for the 2022-23 plan year have been well thought out and discussed,” said Mike Dulaney, executive director of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. “We are confident these changes will allow us to continue to provide a quality, affordable health insurance plan well into the future.”

The Educators Health Alliance is a non-profit corporation that was created to procure quality, affordable health care insurance for Nebraska educational employees. The rates set by the EHA Board are for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska health care plan used by more than 400 public school district and affiliate groups in the state. The plan is governed by a 12-member board representing the Nebraska Association of School Boards, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Nebraska State Education Association. More than 80,000 Nebraskans are covered by the plan, making it the largest health plan in the state.

NE sends TOY duo to DC



Speaking for educators: (Above) From left, Paul Timm meets President Joe Biden, and (center) meets with First Lady Dr. Jill Biden at the White House. (Right) Timm and Megan Helberg visited the White House while representing Nebraska as Teachers of the Year for 2021 and 2020. (Left) Megan Helberg meets Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona.

Timm, Helberg speak for public education

Paul Timm and Megan Helberg, Nebraska's 2021 and 2020 Teachers of the Year, respectively, visited Washington, D.C., in October as part of their TOY duties. In an unusual scenario, the two embarked on the trip together, as the annual activities were postponed in 2020 because of COVID-19. While at the nation's capital, Timm and Helberg attended a White House meeting at the invitation of First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, an educator, and Secretary of Education Dr. Miguel Cardona. Afterward, they were treated to a surprise visit from President Joe Biden, and Helberg had an exclusive meeting with Dr. Jill Biden. They also toured the Smithsonian Museums and the African American History and Culture Museum. The trip was a chance for TOYs from all states to meet with members of Congress and the Senate to advocate for public education.

Center gives schools easier access to COVID testing

Efforts to boost COVID-19 testing resources for schools are underway in Nebraska.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has funded four regional coordination centers to provide easier access to testing to help schools and other congregate settings reopen or remain open safely while reaching under served populations.

The Midwest Coordination Center provides COVID-19 testing in 16 states, including Nebraska. All supplies, shipping and testing are free. A school can partner with MCC to become registered and be paired with a certified partner laboratory that provides standard swab and saliva rapid testing under FDA Emergency Use Authorization.

The MCC says voluntary serial screening tests of individuals who have no symptoms help quickly identify potentially contagious cases and prevent further transmission or outbreaks.

Other eligible sites include shelters, youth-serving organizations like YMCA or 4-H, correctional facilities, childcare centers and nursing homes.

The coordination center provides training and support, coordinates the distribution of sample collection and shipping supplies, and coordinates the reporting of results to individuals, schools and facilities.

A school or other site's responsibility in the program is to develop a local testing plan, obtain consent documents and authorizations to release test results from parents, coordinate sample collec-

tion during school hours, send samples for testing and then act based on the results. A school may partner with its local health department as a test site.

A testing plan includes a schedule for frequent testing, a targeted testing population, a process for collecting and shipping samples, and a plan for follow-up actions, such as quarantining students and staff and contact tracing, if a positive test result is returned.


Restrictions on who may collect samples vary by state. Some states require a medical professional to obtain samples. Sites such as schools are responsible for ensuring these individuals are appropriately trained and meet state requirements.

For more information, go to test-edandprotected.org.



"I decided I wanted to become an even better history teacher so I started taking history classes at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. After the first class I was hooked. The quality of the curriculum and professors made me decide to keep going and get my master's degree."


Steve Sonksen
History, MA
University of Nebraska at Kearney




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Nominate now for NSEA awards

Members and local associations, as well as administrators and friends of education are eligible for top honors to be given at NSEA's Delegate Assembly in April.

Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, Education Support Professional or deserving group.

Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 11, 2022, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online at www.nsea.org/DA, with required supporting material mailed to the NSEA.

The 2022 Assembly will be held April 22-23 at Lincoln's Marriott Cornhusker Hotel.

Members are eligible for:

- **Early Career Educator:** To honor a teacher who has excelled in their first five years.

- **Award for Teaching Excellence:** Honors a teacher who has excelled in the classroom over a period of time.

- **Education Support Professional of the Year:** Honors an ESP who has excelled in his or her job.

Finalists will be notified in March, with winners announced at the Assembly. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award.

Members are also eligible for:

- **The Great Plains Milestone:** Honors an individual or group for promoting human and civil rights.

- **Community Service:** Honors NSEA members or local associations involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.

- **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding internal communication.

Also to be presented:

- **Administrator of Excellence:** Honors an administrator who strives every day to get students and staff to be successful.

- **Friend of Education:** Honors an individual or organization that has made a statewide contribution to education.

- **Outstanding Media:** Honors newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues and promotion of public education.

Spring Delegate Assembly to decide direction of NSEA

Plans are underway for the April 2022 Delegate Assembly – the 161st assembly in NSEA history.

The event is being planned as an in-person gathering April 22-23 at the Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker Hotel.

Delegate Assembly is NSEA's annual business meeting. Members from across the state, representing local associations large and small, urban and rural, are elected to attend. They manage the business and set the future course of the Association.

A keynote speaker, discussion of educational issues and consideration of updates to NSEA Bylaws and Resolutions are all part of the assembly action. Proposed bylaw amendments are due by March 8. Watch for details in upcoming editions of The Voice.

In 2022, one NEA Director seat and an Education Support Professional At-Large seat are up for election to the NSEA Board of Directors.

The event also features an awards presentation, recognizing the Early Career Educator of the Year, ESP of the Year, and an award for Teaching Excellence, among other honors for NSEA members and friends of education.

Members must be elected by their local association in order to attend as a delegate to the assembly. A Delegate Assembly 101 virtual session is planned for 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 16, for those interested in learning more. NSEA leadership will present an overview of NSEA and DA. Register for the session at www.nsea.org/PDforMembers.

To make your interest in serving as a delegate known, contact your local association president, your local association building or faculty representative or your NSEA organizational specialist.

NSEA's first meeting was held as the Nebraska State Teachers Association in Brownville on Oct. 16, 1867, just months after Nebraska gained statehood. NSEA is the state's oldest professional association and has held a Delegate Assembly almost every year since, and in some cases, twice a year.



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Axtell teacher takes new approach as ESP

Jennifer Marsh knew she wanted to teach by the time she was in second grade.

"I loved my teacher, Mrs. Bouquet, and I wanted to grow up and be just like her," Marsh said. "When my cousins would get together at my grandparents' house, I would make them play school."

Marsh taught second grade for 10 years in Kearney and a variety of grades in Axtell, including kindergarten, second, third and K-4 special education.

She subbed in the Axtell district for five years while raising her three children. That eventually turned into a full-time third-grade teaching job. But Marsh noticed a trend: the school had trouble keeping special education teachers. It had four different ones in five years.

"We've had good teachers, just young ones who had life opportunities that led them elsewhere," she said. "I wanted our special education students to have more stability, and I was ready for a change, so I volunteered to move to special education."

A new outlook?

The district developed a new framework for reading and math intervention, which increased the number of students visiting Marsh's special education room. She asked to have a paraeducator work alongside her to help balance the workload, a request administrators thought would be fine.

Marsh lined up two paras who were willing to train with the new framework, but once the school year began, they both were needed elsewhere, leaving Marsh to handle everything on her own. One of those, Marsh's best friend Shannon Sis, became ill and passed away mid-year.

"I was seeing students from the beginning of the day to the end of the day, often without time for lunch. That left time for paperwork, meetings, lesson planning and preparing outside of school hours," Marsh said. "I found myself sleeping about four hours a night at least six days a week. The stress I personally took on for each and every one of the students I worked with, as well as losing my best friend and co-worker, took a toll on me both physically and mentally."

By January, she'd had enough and asked the district to hire another special education teacher to help ease the load. It had hired two new staff the previous two years, and she was told the school board wouldn't go for it three years in a row.

Marsh began applying for jobs elsewhere, but they didn't pan out.

A specialist analyzed the special education program to find ways to increase ef-



Meaningful connections: Nebraska paraeducators had the chance to learn and connect at the Nov. 9 Paraeducator Conference in Kearney. Pictured are (from left) NSEA Organizational Specialist Jen Dubas, paras Carissa Stritt and Jennifer Marsh, both of the Axtell Education Association, and NSEA OS Judy Roach.

iciency. In March, Marsh had two student teachers, which helped.

"I finally started to feel part of the weight being lifted off of me because we had two teachers working together to assist with the planning, preparing and teaching load I had been enduring by myself," Marsh said. "We worked as a powerhouse team."

That's when she started thinking outside the box.

Making the switch

Marsh asked administrators to hire her as a paraeducator and hire one of the student teachers as the full-time special education teacher upon graduation.

"The trade off for me in losing a significant amount of income would be I could clock in and clock out to provide me with some freedom to get my personal priorities in order," she said.

Though she also would lose her insurance benefits, Marsh and her husband decided the best choice for her health was that she wouldn't "teach" the next year.

"It was a gut-wrenching decision, but my faith lets me know we will be provided for, and sometimes there is a lot more to life than earning a living," Marsh said.

Her friend, Sis, was another inspiration for the decision.

"She LOVED being a paraeducator, and I always envied her for the connections she made with the students that depended on her to get them through their school day," Marsh said.

Marsh knew it would cost the district

less money to hire a new, younger teacher, rather than keep her in the role with 20 years of experience and a master's degree.

The difference was enough that they could keep Marsh on as a paraeducator. That way, she could still have a hand in bringing the new intervention framework to fruition – or so she hoped. Most of those duties were reassigned to staff on other committees she's not able to be on as a para.

"That is hard on my ego. It's kind of like going from a team captain on the varsity team to the waterboy," she said.

Marsh is still passionate about teaching, her students, her colleagues and the Axtell community, and she's making a difference in other ways.

"When I am working with kids, whether it is morning duty, recess duty, or helping a student with math, reading or friendship problems, and sometimes even giving them a safe place to have a tantrum, I am doing what I was meant to do," Marsh said. "All I have ever wanted to do is teach and serve others. I still get to do that, and for that I am grateful. I am proud to be an ESP!"

Marsh is in her third year as the Axtell Education Association president. Her first year in the role, she led a bylaw change to allow ESPs to join the association. Her goal is to get enough ESP members for them to have bargaining power, too.

"Maybe now that I am an ESP, my voice will have more of an impact," she said. "Our support staff deserves beyond measure more than is currently being offered to them."

Coaches, musicians, nurse make headlines in November

Members present at Music Educators Conference

Local education associations were well represented at the Nebraska Music Educators Association Conference Nov. 17-19 in Lincoln.

The conference brought together music educators from the elementary to collegiate levels and everything in between. It included workshops and performances by high school and collegiate bands, orchestras and choirs.

Numerous NSEA members attended, and 18 presented breakout sessions. They included:

Stacie Blackmore – Cozad
Debbie Martinez, Ryan Placek, Craig Mathis and Jody Lindquist – Millard
Gail Carpenter Johnson – Westside
Joshua Roach and Dr. Matt Hill – Peru State College
Paul Ketchen – Springfield Plat-teview
Mark Harman – Fremont
Judy Welch, Chase Crispin, Dr. Marci DeAmbrose and Rebecca Wilhelm – Lincoln
Jessie Andre – Norris
Lindsay Wilson – Papillion-LaVista
Regina Farris – Hampton
Thomas Michalek – Hastings

OPS nurse featured in nursing journal

Tonja Frank, a registered nurse and NSEA member working in Omaha Public Schools, was featured in the November edition of the *American Journal of Nursing*.

Frank recounted her 33 years in nursing and her experiences returning to school in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I think the biggest challenge for school nurses is negotiating how to assess for COVID



Frank



Musical members: The Nebraska Music Educators Association Conference was buzzing with NSEA members Nov. 17-19 in Lincoln. Pictured at left, Bryan Bohn of the Oakland-Craig Education Association stops by the NSEA booth to visit with Organizational Specialist Megan Lyons. At right, OS Todd Tystad (left) talks with Joshua Harris of the Centennial Education Association.

without over assessing," Frank said in the article, part of the Journal's "Conversations" section. "I can't send every kid home who walks in and says they have a stomachache or a headache. But I also don't want to miss a kid who has a stomachache or a headache and has COVID. I feel like I'm walking this tightrope of keeping the kids safe and healthy at school and yet not alienating parents because I'm sending their kids home left and right."

Frank served as the co-lead contact tracer for OPS last year, working with people from all 70 OPS buildings. She currently serves as one of the chief organizers for NSEA's nurses organizing project, and she is a former Omaha Education Association board member.

Coaches honored among top in state

The National Federation of State High School Associations and the Nebraska School Activities Association announced the 2020-2021 State Coaches of the Year.

Of the 23 honorees, 11 are NSEA members. They include:

Chris Ardisson and **Mark Rotter**, Bruning Davenport Shickley – Football
Tim Cannon, Millard North – Boys Basketball
Keith Cummings, Fremont – Boys



Bowling

Brock Ehler, Scottsbluff – Girls Golf

Greg Geary, Millard South – Baseball

Kurt Holliday, Seward – Girls Cross Country

Josh Johnson, Wayne – Girls Bowling

Michele Kontor, Milford – Boys Cross Country

Dan Nelson, North Bend Central – Unified Sports, Bowling

Ann Prince, Elkhorn North – Girls Basketball

These coaches will be honored during halftime of the Class A Girls State Basketball Championship final on Friday, March 11, 2022 at Pinnacle Bank Arena in Lincoln.

In Memory

We recognize these educators and NSEA members whom we've lost in the last few months.

Edythe Peden Cascini, 94, Lincoln

L. Gerane Drewes, 92, Beatrice

Brenda Sue Doxtator, 71, Alliance



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10 tips for virtual holiday shopping

While you are carefully crafting your holiday gift list (and checking it twice!) cyber criminals are perfecting their cyber scams, online fraud schemes and identity theft plans.

Before you join the millions of others searching out those perfect stocking stuffers, check out these 10 tips to protect yourself and your family online.

1. Secure your home network. Use strong passwords and WPA2 or WPA3 encryption. Change your router/modem's default name and pre-set password.

2. Update your antivirus software. Antivirus software is always being updated (thanks to a continuous stream of new threats), so make sure yours is up to date on all your household's devices.

3. Use a password manager. Create strong passwords on all your devices and use a password manager to keep track. Consider using two-factor authentication to add an extra layer of protection.

4. Update your devices. Operating system and software updates often include security updates. Make sure your computers, tablets and phones are all updated. Turn on auto-updates so you don't have to think about it.

5. Use one or two credit cards and monitor them. Using just one or two cards for your holiday shopping will make it much easier to track purchases and spot fraud early on. Some lenders will alert you when your card logs transactions that are out of your normal spending pattern and ask your permission before completing the purchase.

6. Only shop reputable websites. Big brands and companies are more likely to have strong security on their site's transaction platform. But no matter the website, if a link, landing page or online shopping cart looks suspicious, log off immediately.

7. Watch for phishing. Phishing spikes during the holidays. These emails and texts usually look like they're coming from a source or company you know. They typically ask for sensitive information and ask you to click on a link or attachment. Remember that government agencies and reputable companies will never ask you to send sensitive information this way. Delete these messages without clicking on anything.

8. Be smart on social media. If you're headed out of town during the holidays, don't post plans or info publicly on your social channels. This could make your home vulnerable to a break-in.

9. Be savvy with donations. Many

people generously open their wallets during the holidays to help those in need or causes they support, but be extra cautious. Stick to reputable, well-known charities. Contact them directly to donate, rather than clicking on a link or giving over the phone.

10. Watch your front porch. More online shopping means more deliveries. Bring packages in as soon as possible so they don't tempt thieves. Neglected pack-

ages may also make it look like you're out of town, making your home a target for burglars.

Make sure all family members are on board with, understand and carry out the above tips before logging on to find those hot holiday deals. This includes kids and teens who are at home and on screens all day – and who usually aren't as savvy about security and scams.



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Save big on discounted tickets today at **neamb.com/tickets**

Fall conference a chance to reunite

The NSEA-Retired Fall Conference was full of fun and learning. The event, held in late October in Grand Island, brought Retired members together in-person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Members presented on topics ranging from Ancient Egypt to Solar Energy, and performer Melinda Ferree entertained under the guise of Patsy Cline.

A silent auction and additional donations raised \$1,407 for the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. The fund is used to support political candidates who best advocate for public education.

Retired members also spent time writing postcards to NSEA's 427 Education Support Professional members, thanking them for all they do. The cards were sent to ESPs during American Education Week in November.



Thanks, ESPs: Pat Etherton, left, and Margie Nowak, along with seven other NSEA-Retired members, write postcards to ESP members thanking them for all they do.



Now presenting: (Above) Gene Wissenburg shares his experience with residential solar panels. (Left) Roger Rea speaks about he and his wife's trip to Egypt. (Below left) Gary Rath dresses the part to talk about Civil War medicine. (Below) Art Tanderup recounts his experience with aerial photos of crop art.



Shielded in the classroom



It's loud in here: Stacy Anderson, a business instructor at Northeast Community College in Norfolk, shows the face shield she uses instead of wearing a mask when teaching. She does this so her students can see her whole face, but her ears ring by the end of the day because of the reverberation of sound. Anderson is a member of the Northeast Community College Education Association and NSEA.

UNKEA finds transparency key to increasing membership

The University of Kearney Education Association is 140 members strong. That's almost 20 members more than it had in 2017. In fact, the Association has increased its membership every year the past four years.

UNKEA President Dr. Will Avilés said one strategy that has helped boost membership is being open, honest and transparent.

"With the intent of making our union more transparent and more accessible to members, word has gotten out to non-members, we're very deliberate and frequent with the information we share with our members," Avilés said.

Historically, members would gather once a month to talk about issues, such as negotiations.

"We'd discuss these things, but they didn't get the details until they were about to vote on it," he said.

Four or five years ago, the Association began "negotiation updates," sending members information about every 10 days to make it clear what was going on behind the scenes and letting them know where admin-

istration stood at different points throughout the negotiations process.

"Now when we get to the end point, they have a good idea of what's happening," Avilés said.

That started prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but concerns over budget cuts and a reduction in force have led more members to join – thanks in part to the active role UNKEA has played during the pandemic.

"I feel the pandemic has been an important factor," Avilés said. "When we were locking down, we were very public about wanting to be involved in that. Administration wasn't allowing us into their formal meetings, but this was our priority. Everyone knew what UNKEA wanted."

The Association created its own task force, and eventually, university administrators worked with that task force to hear educators' needs and expectations.

"There's no doubt in my mind that the way the university looked was because we were involved in that outcome," Avilés said.

Learn to be a delegate, address your student debt

One perk of your NSEA membership is access to exclusive webinars tailored to the education profession.

A full slate of sessions is set for 2021-22, with topics ranging from building your own budget to self-care to participating in NSEA's Delegate Assembly. Go to nsea.org/webinars for a complete list of sessions.

NSEA members only

■ **Budgeting:** Thursday, Dec. 2, 6:30 p.m. Learn budgeting tips from NEA Member Benefits' Susan Estes.

■ **Financial Planning:** Thursday, Dec. 2, 7:30 p.m. Review financial concepts that can affect you during early, middle and late career stages with Security Benefit.

■ **Student Loan Forgiveness:** Tuesday, Dec. 7, 5:30 p.m. Learn about tools available to members for reducing or managing student loan debt.

■ **Student Debt Navigator:** Tuesday, Dec. 7, 6:30 p.m. Learn to use the NEA Debt Navigator, which can find forgiveness or cancellation programs for which you may qualify.

■ **Budgeting:** Tuesday, Dec. 7, 7:30 p.m. Learn budgeting tips from NEA Member Benefits' Susan Estes.

■ **Delegate Assembly 101:** Thursday, Dec. 16, 7:30 p.m. Hear from NSEA officers as they answer the question, "What is Delegate Assembly?" and learn why you should run for election to be a delegate.

Watch for January's line up of professional development opportunities in the January edition of The Voice.

All school employees

■ **Self-care for Educators:** Thursday, Dec. 9, 7 p.m. During uncertain and unsettling times, it's hard to know what to do to make sure your staff is prepared for what's next. Join Linda Kenedy from EHA Wellness to explore how current situations are affecting school employees, the effects of stress and anxiety, and resources to help.

Present or be a mentor

NSEA is looking for members who would like to share their ideas and skills. If you are interested in leading a webinar, contact Isau Metes at isau.metes@nsea.org.

NSEA also is always seeking mentors and mentees in the classroom. For more information and to fill out an application, visit www.nsea.org/mentor.

Speaking of Education

“If I had to pick the profession in which I thought you could have the most influence upon people, it’s teaching.”

— Antonin Scalia,
U.S. Supreme Court Justice

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

NEA Director, ESP seats to be elected at DA

One NEA Director seat and an Education Support Professional At-Large seat will be up for election at the April 2022 Delegate Assembly.

The NEA Director serves on the NSEA Board of Directors Executive Committee and is one of two Nebraska representatives on the Na-

tional Education Association Board. Directors serve a three-year term and may be elected for up to two consecutive terms.

The ESP At-Large position represents all Nebraska ESP members with a vote on the NSEA Board.

All candidates must declare their

candidacy by Tuesday, Feb. 15, in writing to the NSEA Executive Director, trish.guinan@nsea.org.

Alternately, candidates may mail their declaration to NSEA Elections, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742.

Elections will take place during Delegate Assembly April 22-23, 2022.

What's the most memorable gift you've received from a student?

A thank you, years later.
— Roxanna Fay Fees

A family of students I taught made homemade raisin bread. Best five years of gifts ever.
— Yvonne E Martin

Handmade ornaments for my school tree at home, and the gift card for the spirit store, and a card for Home Depot.

— Tracy Froien

Thank you note.
— Carissa Stowe

Artwork drawn by the student.
— Deb Brunswick

A surprise baby shower!
— Wade Anderson

Unexpected handwritten thank you notes from students.
— Lisa Fricke

The best gift came 20 years after retirement when my husband passed away. The outpouring of love and concern from parents and students over several weeks was overwhelming. It has been almost a year and they are still there.
— Maureen Kowker



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