

THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ March 2019

SECOND CHANCE

Young Elkhorn Teacher
Who Left the Profession
is Enjoying His Return,
Assisted by NSEA

NSEA Backs Revised
Discipline Bill

NSEA University
Gains Star Power



THE VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association
605 S. 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508
nsea.org
402-475-7611 • 1-800-742-0047

Volume 72, No. 7
ISSN Number: 1085-0783
USPS Number: 000-369

Executive Director **Maddie Fennell, NBCT**
Assoc. Executive Director **Neal Clayburn**
Director of Public Affairs **Karen Kilgarin**
Assistant Comm. Director **Al Koontz**

NSEA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President **Jenni Benson, Lincoln**
jenni.benson@nsea.org
Vice President **Paul Schulte, Millard**
meapresident@hotmail.com
NEA Director **Tracy Hartman-Bradley, Omaha**
trhb1000@gmail.com
NEA Director **Linda Freye, Lincoln**
lfrey62@gmail.com

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

Published 10 times yearly according to this schedule: September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May and August.

Payment of annual NSEA membership dues entitles Nebraska educators to receive The Voice. Total cost of producing 10 monthly issues of The Voice each year is less than \$2 per member.

Advertising rates available upon request. All advertisements and advertisers are screened prior to publication. Appearance of an advertisement in The Voice does not necessarily imply NSEA endorsement of either the product being advertised or the views expressed.



Find us on Facebook at:
facebook.com/nsea.org
Find us on Twitter at:
@nsea_org
Find us on Instagram at:
@nsea_org
Find us on YouTube at:
NSEAMEDIA

A Great Public School for Every Child.

Pay Gap at All-Time High

Gap Between Teachers, Similar Workers, at All-Time High

According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), the teacher pay penalty – the percent by which public school educators are paid less than comparable workers – is at an all-time high. When adjusting only for inflation, researchers found that teachers, compared to other college grads, were paid nearly \$350 less per week in salary in 2017, or 23 percent less.

When adjusted for education, experience, and demographic factors, the gap had barely shrunk – 18.7 percent, up from 17 percent in 2015.

While benefits such as health insurance and retirement improved for teachers relative to

other professionals in that period, the total compensation (wage and benefit) penalty for public school teachers grew from 10.5 percent to 11.1 percent in 2017.

“This growing compensation penalty is a key part of the story of changing teacher pay but shouldn’t obscure the importance of the wage penalty alone — only wages can be saved or spent on housing and food and other critical expenses,” said the authors.

The teacher pay penalty has grown significantly among women. In 1960, female teachers earned 14.7 percent *more* than comparable female workers, an advantage that lasted through most of the 1970s but was completely erased by the 1990s. In 2017, the wage gap for female teachers was 15.6 percent.

The male teacher wage gap is much wider, standing at 27 percent in 2017.

There is no state where teacher pay is equal to or better than that of other college graduates.

“Eliminating the teacher pay penalty is crucial to building the teacher workforce we need. In order to recruit and retain talented teachers, school districts need to address the inadequacy of teacher pay,” said Lawrence Mishel, EPI Distinguished Fellow and co-author of the paper with University of California at Berkeley Economist Sylvia Allegretto. “As we’ve seen across the country in states like Wash-

ington, Arizona, and

Oklahoma, teachers are tired of working demanding jobs with low pay.” A poll by Phi Delta Kappan found two-thirds of Americans believe teacher salaries are too low, and that the public appears wiser to reckless decisions made by lawmakers that hurt schools.

As the EPI paper makes clear, blaming the Great Recession for the widening teacher wage gap no longer holds water in light of fiscal policies in states — including Arizona, Oklahoma and North Carolina — where the teacher pay penalty is largest.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities says seven of 12 states that cut education funding by at least 7 percent over the past decade also enacted tax cuts for the wealthiest individuals and corporations at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Regional Wage Gap Lowest in Wyoming

Wyoming teachers enjoy the lowest wage gap in the nation at 3.1 percent. The wage gap in Nebraska is 24.3 percent. Here is the ranking of Nebraska and adjacent states:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Wyoming..... | 3.1 percent |
| So. Dakota..... | 22.1 percent |
| Iowa..... | 23.0 percent |
| Kansas..... | 23.2 percent |
| Nebraska..... | 24.3 percent |
| Missouri..... | 33.2 percent |
| Colorado..... | 35.1 percent |

Have Your Contact Details Changed?

Have you moved? Have you changed your name by marriage? Are you planning to move? If so, you can update your NSEA membership information online.

How? Log on to the NSEA website and click on the ‘Member Info’ button on the left side of the screen. Then click on the ‘For Members’ link and look for the ‘Member Update’ icon in the center of the next screen, and follow directions. Keep your issue of The Voice near, as the mailing label includes your membership number, used to access your information. The NSEA website is at:

www.nsea.org

On the Cover: Elkhorn Education Association’s Jake Barry taught for one year, then quit, burned out. After a year off, he’s back, enthused and assisting with the leadership of a new NSEA program aimed at assisting early career educators. For the story, turn to Page 7.

Teach Them, and Growth Will Come



**NSEA President
Jenni Benson**

“

*A thriving,
top-notch
and growing
system
of public
education will
provide the
skilled citizens
of tomorrow
that these
policymakers
and employers
treasure.*

”

A wise man once said that “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.”

If I were to equate that adage with one of my warm-weather joys, gardening, I might say that “a seed that’s already in the ground is worth two seeds in the wind.”

So, when policymakers get up and make earnest proclamations and declarations about how their actions and ideas will “grow Nebraska” with tax cuts, paid internships for businesses, as well as corporate incentives, it gives me pause. Why are state lawmakers disinvesting in the “seeds” we already have in our rich Nebraska landscape, and using some of our remaining tax dollars in the uncertain hope of attracting “seeds” that are supposedly searching in the wind for a well-fertilized landing spot?

Such “grow Nebraska” talk is always about attracting high-paying, highly skilled jobs. The theory is that those jobs will benefit business; will spur economic growth; and will expand the tax base. The theory is that we’ll all see our tax bills lowered and our lives improved. It is a laudable goal, to be sure. But as a gardener, I think we’re fertilizing the wrong field.

Invest in Mentoring

That thought leads me to ... shamrocks.

I have a pot of shamrocks in my office. I got them when my good friend and mentor, Francetta Gilsdorf, passed away in 2013. She most definitely possessed a green thumb, and my shamrocks remind me of her every day. She was a wonderful mentor who helped me grow, continuing her mentorship and my growth long after she retired. She taught me many wonderful skills and methods over the years, and I often think of and treasure her advice.

Such mentorship is the unspoken responsibility of every educator. We must mentor our students. We must also mentor the new educators we greet into the profession each year. We must help each other grow – there’s that word! – into effective teachers and support staff.

Consider this: There are about 1,800 first year teachers entering the profession in Nebraska each year. We can all help those new teachers grow and

thrive through local, structured mentoring programs and through the informal spur-of-the-moment mentoring that happens in school building hallways and lounges every moment of every day.

We can also set a new standard for mentoring through LB241, now under consideration by the Nebraska Legislature. LB241 would set basic mentoring guidelines and provide grants to school districts for mentoring programs (learn more on page 11). The grants would be financed using state revenue derived from solar and wind

energy agreements on the thousands of acres of state-owned “school lands” in Nebraska.

But we could do so much more...

Inevitable Growth

Let’s think about the “seeds we already have in the ground” here in Nebraska.

Policymakers say they want to “grow Nebraska.”

I believe we are already “growing” Nebraska. Enrollment is up dramatically in Nebraska’s K-12 schools in recent years. Student numbers in Norfolk are up by 450 since 2010. Enrollment in Lincoln is up by 8,000 students – 24 percent! – in the past 10 years. State-wide enrollment is up more than 18,500 students since 2013-14, an almost 5.4 percent growth rate.

I suggest policymakers invest in and fertilize the “growth” that is already happening here at home. State and local investment in our schools and our own people is much more of a sure thing than are tax cuts and trendy business incentives that are meant to attract and keep industry, but in the end do little more than line the pockets of corporate executives and enhance the bottom line for shareholders.

A thriving, top-notch and growing system of public education will provide the skilled citizens of tomorrow that these policymakers and employers treasure. Quality schools are also one of the top attractions for companies looking to relocate.

We are growing here in Nebraska. Let’s feed that growth and invest wisely in public schools! Because if you teach the children – and teach them well – growth will come.

Mentoring Available for Early Career Educators

If you are in the first seven years of your teaching career and would like a mentor or instructional coaching, contact NSEA Organizational Specialist Cindy Copich at 1-800-742-0047 or at: cindy.copich@nsea.org



We're ready for 2019...

Are you?



What does 2019 have in store for you? Whatever it is, make sure your cash is ready when you are.

Become a member and open a special savings account today. It can be a Vacation or Christmas savings account, or savings for any event you choose!



It's easy! Just identify the amount you wish to save and use payroll deduction or direct deposit to automatically deposit the money to your special savings account.

Your cash will be ready when you are.

*We make **SAVING** easy!*



*The credit union trusted by educators
for more than 50 years!*

Checking



Savings



eServices



Auto Loans



Mortgages



Credit Cards



Apply online at firstnebraska.org or call (402) 492-9100

NMLS# 416540
Federally insured by NCUA.



Schools 'Increasingly Prepared' for Concussions

Survey: 92 Percent of Districts have Policy; Teachers Want Concussion Management PD

A survey of more than 2,600 educators has found that 92 percent of Nebraska school districts have a formal policy for removal and return to play for athletes with a suspected concussion.

The survey found that Nebraska teachers are increasingly prepared to meet the needs of a student with a concussion. More than 71 percent of teachers said they know how to modify lesson plans to meet needs of a student who has had a concussion.

The survey was conducted by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Injury Prevention Program. Respondents included administrators and teachers (NSEA sent the survey to all members in October 2018). The Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska coordinated the survey with NSEA, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, the Nebraska Association of School Boards and the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association.

The goal was to evaluate implementation of school district concussion policies, with a particular focus on the topic of students returning to the classroom after sustaining a concussion – commonly known as “return-to-learn.” The survey also found that:

- More than 82 percent of districts have a written return-to-learn policy.

- 78 percent of administrators have participated in concussion training.

- 62.3 percent of teachers have had to provide classroom adjustments for a student with a concussion or mild head injury in the past five years.

- A similar number – 62.4 percent – agree or strongly agree that they would benefit from a greater understanding about concussion management, including classroom adjustments.

In 2012, the Nebraska Legislature enacted the Concussion

Awareness Act. A 2014 amendment addresses students returning to the classroom after sustaining a concussion. There are five components to the act: concussion education training for coaches; information on concussions to all athletes and parents; an athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion must be removed from competition; the athlete removed must receive written clearance from the appropriate health care provider and his/her parents before returning to play; and schools must have a policy outlining the protocol for students returning to the classroom after a concussion.

There was one major disconnect uncovered. While 80 percent of administrators and school nurses indicated their district has a return-to-learn policy that provides adjustments for the classroom work of a student with a suspected concussion, just over half of teachers (52.8 percent) indicated knowledge of their district's policy, and nearly one-third (32.9 percent) did not know.

To learn more about the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska, go to:

<https://biane.org>

Brain Injury Confab @ Kearney

The 13th Nebraska Brain Injury Conference is set March 28-29 in Kearney.

Thursday's scheduled includes two general sessions, followed by six breakouts and a panel discussion, sandwiched around lunch. Friday starts with four breakouts followed by two general sessions.

The conference is at the Younes Center behind the Holiday Inn at the Kearney I-80 interchange. The registration deadline is March 15. Up to 10.3 continuing education contact hours are available.

For details, go to:

biane.org

A Little Prevention on How to Avoid Career-Ending Mistakes

PPC is Coming to a Meeting Near You

The Nebraska Professional Practices Commission is on the road!

Clerk of the Commission Kelly Muthersbaugh is ready to travel to local association or area meetings to tell the story of the NPPC, with two goals in mind.

First, Muthersbaugh hopes to get the word out about the 12-member commission. Second, she hopes that a little bit of knowledge will be worth a whole bunch of prevention.

Muthersbaugh says the Commission sees too many cases involving social media, for instance, that result in suspension or revocation of teaching certificates. Complaints filed against a teacher often land in Muthersbaugh's office once the complaint

has been investigated. Once it is filed with the NPPC, a public hearing is held before the 12-member Commission to determine possible action.

Commission members – a mix of teachers and administrators – then recommend action to the State Board of Education. The Commission might recommend no action, a suspension of a teaching certificate for a set time, or complete revocation of a teaching license, depending on the infraction.

“Letting members know about what we do may prevent teachers from making a mistake that could end a career,” she said.

Muthersbaugh is willing, depending on availability, to appear at association meetings, regional meetings or elsewhere to talk about the work of the NPPC. To schedule a visit by Muthersbaugh, contact her at 402-471-2943, or email her at:

kelly.muthersbaugh@nebraska.gov

NSEA is Everywhere on Social Media!

In 1995, NSEA became the very first state association to have a website.

Since then, NSEA has stayed on top of social media with an active and prize-winning outreach effort that includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube and other social media accounts.

This effort keeps members and the public informed about education and the good news of public schools.

NSEA's social media presence has been recognized each year with awards for excellence from the State Education Association Communicators (SEAC), which represents the work of commu-

nications staff at National Education Association state associations across the nation.

A list of NSEA's social media directory can be found at www.nsea.org/social. Members can also go to www.nsea.org/calendar to find and download calendar items to personal devices



CHADRON STATE COLLEGE

*Start when it fits your schedule
Fall, Spring, Summer*

AFFORDABLE MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS

Earning my Master's in Educational Administration through Chadron State College was a great decision. This program was exactly what I was looking for. The online access and availability of classes made getting my master's a simple process, especially since I have two young children and a full-time job teaching and coaching. The faculty was wonderful and helped me reach my goals.

Dan Dorwart
Sidney, Nebraska



Master's in Educational Administration

- School Principal (elementary, secondary, PK-12)
- Special Education Supervisor (Birth-12)

See our other graduate education degrees at: csc.edu/graduate/degree.csc

Apply Now at csc.edu

csc.edu | 1-800-CHADRON | 1000 Main Street | Chadron, Nebraska

Chadron State College is an equal opportunity institution. CSC does not discriminate against any student, employee or applicant on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, or age in employment and education opportunities, including but not limited to admission decisions. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies and practices may be directed to: Anne DeMersseman, Compliance Coordinator, Chadron State College, 1000 Main St., Chadron, NE 69337, Telephone: 308-432-6224, Email: ademersseman@csc.edu.

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



More Time for Family: Elkhorn Education Association member Jake Barry is a passionate advocate for a program that assists educators who are just starting out in the teaching profession. Here, he gets an assist at his classroom desk with sons Amos, August, Ainsely and Alister.

On the Comeback Tour

Young Elkhorn Teacher Who Left the Profession
is Enjoying His Return, Thanks in Part to NSEA's NGEN Cadre

When Jake Barry quit teaching three years ago, he was on the verge of burnout, he was missing out on time with his wife and two boys and was willing to leave his profession for a job in the private sector.

And that was after just one year in the profession.

"I was spending all my time in the classroom," said Barry. "I was doing a lot of extra stuff and I felt like I didn't have nearly enough family time."

The overwhelmed Barry left his job teaching seventh grade English and found work in tech support for a telecommunications company. It was a different experience, and he regularly came across methods and techniques he could use in the classroom.

"I realized as I was going through those experiences that everything I was taking in I wanted to bring back into the classroom," he said.

That was what he calls his "indicator" that the classroom was still his true calling. One year in the private sector was enough, and today Barry is in his second year back in the



NGEN Assists Teachers in Their First Seven Years

The New Generation of Educators in Nebraska (NGEN) sprang from a year-long study commissioned by NSEA's 2017 Delegate Assembly and is tasked with addressing the needs of teachers in the first seven years of their careers.

"This will be a place for teachers in years one through seven to go and ask questions, learn more and develop leadership qualities," said Heather Fritz, an NSEA organizational specialist charged with advising NGEN. The NGEN program is led and directed by members in their first few years of teaching.

NSEA President Jenni Benson said the program is essential to the Association's future and to education in general.

"We must attract and retain teachers in Nebraska classrooms," said Benson. "From those new-to-the-profession teachers, we must identify and develop future Association leaders. NGEN will be key in both efforts."

For details, call Fritz or your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

classroom for the Elkhorn Public Schools.

"I ended up finding my place, finding my mindset and coming back to the classroom," he said.

'That Isolation You Feel'

Since his return to teaching, Barry has made changes that allow him more time for his growing family, now at four boys under age 6. He's using lists, he's prioritizing tasks, and he's spending less time on television and social media. He also credits his wife, Liz.

"It's also a lot of my wife balancing things. She's super awesome, she's superb," said Barry.

There has also been assistance from NSEA. Barry is quite enthused by a program NSEA introduced a year ago to assist teachers in the early stages of their career. In fact, Barry now has time to help grow and promote the program.

The New Generation of Educators in Nebraska – NGEN for short, and pronounced "engine" – provides just-starting-out educators with contacts, resources and engagement in their local and state education associations.

"I got involved with NGEN because I had the experience of that burnout for the early career educator piece," he said.

He also became involved because of his passion for the issue. In his first year back in the classroom last year, Barry was an Elkhorn Education Association delegate at NSEA's 2018 Delegate Assembly. There, one of the NGEN organizers stood before the nearly 300 delegates to tout the program.

"I was like 'Yes, we need something like this to help early career educators out because I've been there,'" he said.

Barry quickly stood at a microphone to urge delegates to support NGEN. It's been a whirlwind since. NSEA President Jenni Benson recruited Barry to serve on a committee of young educators to direct NGEN. In June, committee members traveled to Ohio to meet and confer with representatives of similar programs in 32 other states. Now, that committee is working to expand NGEN in Nebraska.

"What we're really looking for with NGEN is to build it on a state level because we know that burnout for early career educators, that isolation you feel in the classroom once in a while, really hits home throughout the state, especially in the rural communities," he said.

Resources Now Available

Many new teachers don't know about helpful resources or don't take advantage of those resources until it is too late.

While Elkhorn Public Schools offers professional development "that is super helpful," Barry understood that feeling of isolation.

"I knew there were resources out there, but I didn't know how to access them," he said.

He did not know at the time that additional help from NSEA was just a phone call away. Now, NGEN will provide and promote new resources for new teachers.

Already last fall, NGEN offered a Degrees Not Debt session to Elkhorn educators. Degrees Not Debt is a seminar that assists educators in dealing with student loan debt issues. It is a

product of the National Education Association.

"We had pretty good attendance, and asked for some feedback," he said.

The result was a second session for Elkhorn Public Schools teachers called Know Your Paystub. The district human resources director and the Elkhorn Education Association head negotiator attended and spoke about reading paystubs and about benefits.

"We're trying to build a core district piece first," he said. "Once we have that core group, the (six) NSEA districts will get involved."

That will begin to spread NGEN's message and assistance across the state, he said.

'I got involved with NGEN because I had the experience of that burnout' for the early career educator piece.'

***— Jake Barry,
Elkhorn Education
Association member***

Focused Reflection

That said, Barry and Rae Carbaugh, a fourth-year teacher at Niobrara and vice president of NSEA's Elkhorn District Board of Directors, have already addressed a broader audience. In January they hosted a webinar on work-life balance.

Barry's involvement on the work-life balance session provided him with focused reflection on that piece,

which caused further tweaks to his time management methods.

Another session by Carbaugh, Omaha Education Association's Tatiana Eskridge and Syracuse-Avoca-Dunbar's Megan Pitrat led a Zoom that tackled student behavior just as the winter holiday break was approaching — perfect timing for those with students getting edgy about the pending break.

Jordan Koch, Papillion-LaVista, is organizing around the importance of political awareness and activity, with a focus on mentoring. Koch has also been actively working with NSEA on mentoring legislation, and traveled to Lincoln to testify in favor of LB241 (see story on page 11).

NGEN is also gaining a national reputation. At NEA's request, Barry and Eskridge will travel to Denver in March to present at NEA's annual Leadership Summit.

'My Family Knows Me'

Barry is in a good place on his "comeback tour."

"My wife has told me time and time again 'Wow, it's way better than it was before, with you spending all your time in the classroom,'" said Barry. "Now we feel like my family knows me."

He understands the importance of supporting young teachers, not just from personal experience, but from the experience of others. During his undergrad years at Wayne State College, Barry said he worked with a tight-knit, core group of six or so education majors. Aside from his wife who substitutes on occasion, and who hopes to return to the classroom someday, Barry is the only one of that core group actively teaching. One left the profession because of discipline issues and difficulties paying off student loans on an educator's salary.

Others found passion in other professional endeavors. Another is a missionary's wife and the last is raising a family.

NGEN will help keep teachers in the classroom. NSEA's role is vital in that regard.

"If we don't have that support, that encouragement we have from NSEA, there is no way we can do this," said Barry.



Message Delivered: NSEA-Retired member Marty Peregoy, Peru, visits with Omaha Sen. Wendy DeBoer during a Day of Advocacy by the Retired organization. About 50 retirees attended, despite inclement weather.

Discipline Part II Earns OK

NSEA Testifies in Support of LB147 to Clarify Teacher Intervention Rights

In January, when North Platte Sen. Mike Groene offered a reworked version of the student discipline bill he proposed two years ago, there was talk that it might be destined for the same fate – it went nowhere, a victim of too little support.

Groene's new version, LB147, is a different animal. First, it provides that teachers have the authority to remove a student from the classroom if that student has repeatedly behaved in a disruptive or abusive manner that interferes with the teacher's ability to teach or the ability of other students to learn. The student can only be returned to the classroom with the teacher's consent, or if required by the Special Education Act or Disabilities Education Act.

LB147 also allows for a conference between parents, teachers, administrators and the student, to determine the long-term course of action that is in the best interest of the student. It also prohibits the use of mechanical devices in restraining a violent student.

And Groene, at NSEA's request, has agreed to amend LB147 to say that school personnel, not just teachers and administrators, would be able to use necessary physical intervention, when needed.

"Paraprofessionals, counselors, janitors and other adults employed by a school may also need to intervene to insure safety," NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell told the Legislature's Education Committee in February.

NSEA supports LB147, with that support buoyed by results of a 2017 survey of Association members. The survey drew an astounding 7,000 responses in 48 hours, with 81 percent of respondents indicating that teachers should be given the authority to make the final decision in determining whether a student may return to their classroom if that student is chronically disruptive. Sixty

percent said they believed that teachers and administrators are not allowed to use restraint needed to subdue a student who becomes physically violent. And 82 percent said discipline problems have increased in number in recent years.

Fennell mentioned the survey responses – which included dozens upon dozens of accounts of teachers having been assaulted and injured; of teachers unsure of disciplinary boundaries; of soft or non-existent support from administrators on disciplinary issues – as she voiced NSEA's support for LB147.

Case Law Allows Intervention

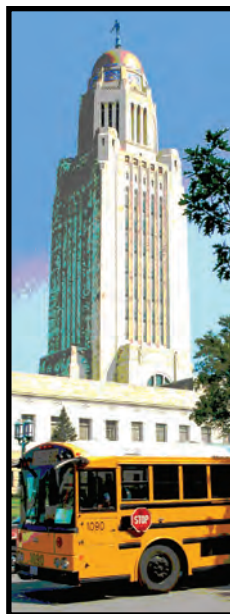
Two years ago, when Groene introduced LB595, NSEA testified to the need for strong support and additional resources and training to ensure safe classrooms.

"At that time, we shared our concern that LB595 did not adequately address the needs of special education students, did not involve administrators in decision making, and did not provide a timeline for the student's return to class with adequate interventions in place," said Fennell. LB147 addresses those issues.

"When a teacher cannot teach due to the continued misbehavior of a student, the teacher will be allowed to use his or her professional discretion to have that student removed by another adult. All involved will then be allowed an appropriate amount of time to develop an intervention plan designed to prevent future disruptions and reintegrate that student into the learning environment."

Fennell said existing case law says teachers can intervene in violent situations without threat of being disciplined for corporal punishment. LB147 would support that case law and put into statute that school personnel can hold the hands, wrists, or torso of a student to control their movements when they are in danger of harming themselves, others or school property.

She said it is wise to "give school personnel the authority to deal with disruptive students while also



Nebraska Legislature '19

having protections in place to ensure that those resources are being used prudently while not disproportionately impacting groups of students.”

Discipline Data and SROs

NSEA also urged support on two other discipline-related bills.

LB495 would be a key component in determining where schools contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline. The bill would authorize the collection of data on school disciplinary actions.

That data would allow examination of whether school disciplinary measures and law enforcement interactions in state schools are being applied disproportionately to some students by analyzing the various demographic indicators such as race/ethnicity, gender, grade level and whether the student has a learning or behavioral disability.

“As we work to provide safe environments for learning, we must make sure that we aren’t unintentionally causing harm to those we are trying to serve,” she said.

Fennell also testified for LB390, creating a template for schools to use school resource officers (SROs). Lincoln Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks offered LB390.

“My concern is that the pendulum has swung too far towards end stage punitive measures,” said Fennell. “Studies show that behavior that once led to a trip to the principal’s office and detention, such as lack of homework, profanity and ‘talking back,’ now often leads to suspension, expulsion, and/or arrest.

Once our students have been arrested, they are too often set on the path of the school-to-prison pipeline, she said.

The primary response of school resource officers, she said, should be to protect schools from outside threats and serious violations that may occur in schools.

Here are a few bills NSEA is tracking.

Disciplinary Due Process Clarified

Updates would be made to the Student Discipline Act under LB515, offered by Sen. Tony Vargas. The intent is the protection of elementary and secondary school students’ constitutional rights to due process. Fennell said schools must provide fairness and equity in disciplinary due process, giving students and parents the chance to a timely appeal if they feel the discipline is not merited. She said LB515 would add clarity for all involved.

Briese’s LB314 Best Route to Property Tax Relief

NSEA President Jenni Benson submitted testimony to the

Revenue Committee indicating Albion Sen. Tom Briese’s LB314 as the best property tax relief offer.

“LB314 is a balanced approach because it provides a balanced menu of replacement revenues for property tax reductions. The bill eliminates several sales and income tax credits for property tax reductions,” she wrote to the committee.

NSEA Lends Support to Retirement Plan Updates

NSEA voiced support in mid-February for two bills dealing with teacher retirement.

LB565 would allow state retirement plans to designate the spouse at the time of a retirement plan member’s death as the beneficiary, if no beneficiary is designated by the married active plan member. If the member is not married at his or her time of death, the estate is designated as the beneficiary.

“Failing to select a beneficiary can cause significant problems for the widow or widower of the deceased plan member, resulting in delayed benefit payments or higher levels of taxation,” Jason Hayes, NSEA director of Public Policy.

LB36 would clarify how creditable service is calculated and paid. It would remove the option of making installment payments for purchase of creditable service but extends by one year the period under which repayment for that service may be made.

Still to be considered at hearing are LB31, which would require the Public Employees Retirement Board, in consultation with the Omaha Public Schools, the Omaha Education Association, the Omaha School Employees Retirement System and other stakeholders to prepare a work plan that examines what must occur to carry out a transfer of management responsibilities for the OSERS plan to PERB.

The bill specifies that the examination of management transfer does not include a merger or consolidation of OSERS with the School Plan, nor does it include assumption of liability for the unfunded balance by the State of Nebraska, NPERS or the PERB. NSEA supports LB31. A hearing is set for March 19 at 5 p.m.

LB706, introduced as a placeholder at the request of the Omaha Public Schools, would grant the OSERS Board of Trustees the authority to place a freeze on cost of living adjustments, including the medical COLA paid to retirees, during calendar year 2020. NSEA has not taken a position, but is closely monitoring LB706.

She said a low level of state financial support forces high property tax rates at the local level. Nebraska ranks 48th in the nation for state support of K-12 education. “We believe increasing the state’s investment in our students and schools is necessary to address the property tax issue. LB314 accomplishes this with revenue-raising measures and calls for a long-overdue study of our state’s school funding formula,” she wrote.

NSEA is a member of Nebraskans United for Property Tax Reform and Education, which has worked with Briese for more than a year to develop LB314.

NSEA Opposes LB497 Property Tax Plan

Benson wrote to the Revenue Committee opposing Henderson Sen. Curt Friesen’s LB497, which reinstitutes a sales tax on food and imposes other regressive taxes for property tax relief.

“Increasing taxes on basic need items such as food only serves to create additional hardships for lower middle-class families who do not qualify for food assistance programs,” said Benson.

LB497 would increase state aid so that every school district would receive up to 50 percent of basic funding from the state. This route, she said, would create property tax winners and losers.

LB497 also lowers valuation of agricultural land for school taxation and limits spending increases by schools. Under LB497, the taxable value of ag land would drop from 72 percent down to 40 percent over three years. This would create a significant shift in tax burden from ag land to residential and commercial property.

Lunch for Students in Poverty

Benson told the Education Committee of NSEA’s support for LB251, introduced by Fremont Sen. Lynne Walz. Under LB251, the Child Hunger and Workforce Readiness Act, students who are eligible for reduced-price breakfasts or reduced-price lunches through federal programs would get those meals at no cost.

More than 20 percent of Nebraska children, about 92,000, are food insecure, according to a 2016 Kids Count report.

“There is growing evidence that well-fed students are better behaved, have better attendance records, are generally healthier and have fewer discipline problems,” said Benson.

Teacher Turnover Costly to Schools, Taxpayers

Quality Mentoring Would Reduce Turnover; Ed Committee Urged to Support LB241

One of the best indicators of long-term teacher success and retention is whether a teacher had the benefit a mentor.

In January, NSEA members urged the Legislature's Education Committee to advance LB241, which would fund mentoring grants to schools through the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). NSEA worked with Sen. Kate Bolz on LB241.

Two NSEA members, Taylor Ruzicka-Scheele and Jordan Koch, told senators of the incredible value of mentoring. Ruzicka-Scheele, a first- and fourth-grade co-teacher at Superior, said mentoring offers a tremendous return on investment.

"If we listen to research, Nebraska can confront the issue of teacher retention and recruitment head-on and be proactive about providing a quality education that attracts and retains families in our state," she said.

Koch, a sixth-year teacher at Papillion-LaVista, agreed.

"If we want to best support our students, we need quality educators who remain in the profession for more than five years," she said.

Anything less is expensive for taxpayers, she said, noting that teacher turnover in the U.S. costs school districts \$2.2 billion each year. She cited a study by the National Center for Education Statistics that found 86 percent of teachers who had been assigned mentors were still teaching after five years. Of teachers who did not have mentors, only 71 percent were teaching after five years.

LB241 requires the NDE to develop mentoring program guidelines. If LB241 is adopted, beginning in fiscal year 2020-21, schools could apply for grant funds for up to a three-year period, with 75 percent of funds used for mentor stipends. The grants would be funded by the income from solar and wind energy agreements on school lands.

NSEA President Jenni Benson said new teachers need to feel



Mentoring Advocates: Superior Education Association member Taylor Ruzicka-Scheele, left, and Papillion-LaVista Education Association's Jordan Koch, right, testified for LB241, a mentoring bill, in late January. With them is Cindy Copich, an NSEA organizational specialist with expertise in teaching and learning issues.

supported during the transition from student teaching to the experience of being the sole decision-maker in the classroom. Benson noted that NSEA is using a grant from NEA to develop a virtual mentoring program called the NSEA Instructional Coaching and Mentoring Program (call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 to participate as a mentor or mentee).

Mentoring is an economic development and workforce issue.

"Like engineers, software developers and others, we educate and train and invest in these teachers. We should do all we can to make certain they stay in the profession and stay in Nebraska," said Ruzicka-Scheele.

LB399 Would Encroach on State Board Duties

When a bill before the Nebraska Legislature proposed adding to already burdensome state-mandated testing, NSEA expressed strong opposition.

That opposition was also based on language that would allow the Legislature to make a foray into curriculum development, traditionally under the purview of the State Board of Education.

Introduced by gubernatorial appointee Sen. Julie Slama, Peru, LB399 would require 8th and 11th grade students to take a specific 100-question citizenship test – the answers to which are easily found online. The test scores would be reported to parents or guardians and aggregate district scores would be reported to the Nebraska Department of Education.

NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell said the Department of Education is now conducting a state statute-mandated revamp of social studies curriculum.

"Curriculum should not be dictated by the legislature. The standards should remain under the purview of the State Board of Education," she said.

The tests were dropped as a mandate, but are retained as options for districts to consider using, along with two other methods. One would require each student to provide a written report or project about a public meeting the student attended. The second would require a paper on an American historical figure.

Another amendment, by Lincoln Sen. Kate Bolz, pulled language from the bill that ordered school districts to assure themselves of "the character of all teachers employed and their knowledge and acceptance of the American form of government."

LB399 adds Constitution Day, Martin Luther King Jr's birthday, Native American Day and Thanksgiving Day as days on which, under the direction of the superintendent, appropriate patriotic exercises would be held in each school. Such exercises are now required on the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln; on Memorial Day; Veterans Day; and Flag Day. LB399 would omit Flag Day.

Former Sen. Lydia Brasch introduced a similar bill last year. It garnered much opposition and was ultimately defeated.

Speaking from a unique perspective, retired Omaha Westside social studies teacher Joe Higgins asked the Education Committee that senators not pile on the current glut of test mandates.

Higgins served on the State Board of Education from 2003-10, including time as president. There, he said, he "came to understand the obligation of the State Board to oversee statewide assessment of individual learning achievement.

"I also learned that the tendency to continually add to the number of state-required tests is an increasing threat to the valuable commodity that is classroom instructional time," he said.

The bill is on General File, but faces stout opposition.

We're working
together to
achieve great
things.

COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

An innovative way to earn your master's degree.

Master of Science in Education: Curriculum & Instruction / A 24-month program / Starts Fall 2019

Communities are forming this fall in Fremont and Grand Island.

Attend an open house or log in to a Zoom session to learn more:

Open House Schedule

Thursday, April 11, 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Board Room | Education Service Unit #2
2320 N Colorado Ave. | Fremont

Thursday, April 25, 4 - 5 p.m.

Grand Island Public Schools Administration Building
123 S. Webb Road | Grand Island

Zoom Meeting Schedule*

Tuesday, April 9, 4 - 6 p.m.

Thursday, April 18, 4 - 6 p.m.

**Please contact us or visit us online at
www.wsc.edu/community for the meeting ID.*

Apply today!

www.wsc.edu/community

For more information:

 402-375-7164

 brjch1@wsc.edu

One degree can make a difference.

Wayne State
College

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

Online classes start Summer and Fall 2019

Master of Science in Education: School Administration (Online)

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

Master of Science in Education: Special Education (Online)

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

Reading Specialist (PK-12) (Online)

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

New Starting Fall 2019! South Sioux City Core Counseling Cohort

Wayne State offers a Master of Science in Education (MSE) in Counseling in the areas of Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling (all endorsements), or Student Affairs and College Counseling. The program consists of a cohort-style community of 36 foundation hours. Once you complete the foundation, you move into your content area depending on your individualized program of study. Remaining program hours are determined by your content area, ranging from 12 to 25 additional hours. Classes meet five Saturdays per semester, usually from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Summer courses are completely online.

Informational Meetings

Saturday, May 11, 5 p.m.

Saturday, May 18, 5 p.m.

Saturday, July 13, 5 p.m.

Location: South Sioux City College Center, 1001 College Way, South Sioux City, NE

Sessions include access to a computer lab to help you start the application and/or registration processes.

Apply today!

www.wsc.edu/graduate



Visit **www.wsc.edu/mse** to learn more about our MSE programs.

Wayne State
College

Wayne, Nebraska • 1-866-WSC-CATS • www.wsc.edu

A proud member of the Nebraska State College System

Accredited by the Higher Learning Commission since 1917, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE)

Special Services Gives BCBS Access

Early Retirees Need EHA Membership for Coverage to Age 65

A question from a non-member that clearly illustrates the value of Association membership came through the NSEA website recently.

The non-member asked this question:

"I have been a member on and off during my 30-plus years of teaching, all in the same school district. I am not a member this year, and plan to retire in the next few years.

"I was told by a retired educator friend that I needed to be an Association member for at least three years to qualify for the health insurance offered at retirement. Is this true?"

A short time later, a second, similar question landed in the website in-box:

"I'm trying to find out information about the insurance for pre-65 retirement. I'm a member of NSEA-Retired. Does that membership allow me to be eligible for insurance when I retire from teaching? I was told once that I needed to be a member of NSEA and NEA."

The short answer is no, you do not need to be a member of NSEA to obtain Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska coverage between retirement and age 65. However, the questions deserve longer responses.

One Qualification

Those educators who choose to retire as early as 50 must pay an annual special services fee that allows them to continue Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska coverage through the Educators Health Alliance (EHA) Direct Bill plan until they reach age 65 and Medicare eligibility. The annual service fee for access to that direct bill plan is \$250, or \$125 for members of NSEA-Retired (the NSEA-Retired membership dues are \$60 per year, or \$450 for a life membership outside of Lincoln and Omaha. Annual dues for members of the Omaha Education Association are \$70; annual



dues for Lincoln Education Association members are \$75. Life membership dues in Omaha and Lincoln are \$550.).

Those fees do not include the monthly Blue Cross and Blue Shield insurance premium.

Aside from the age 50 and over requirement, there is only one qualification for the direct bill plan: the applicant must be on a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska plan through a Nebraska school district during the five years immediately prior to retirement or prior to separation from group coverage. There is no Association membership requirement.

Consider, however, the Rule of 85 early retirement program for educators (that NSEA worked to enact and continues to protect today) would not be financially viable for most educators without the availability of special services program managed by the NSEA.

Also important: the history behind the statewide health insurance plan for educators. NSEA leaders had the foresight to begin working on a statewide plan as far back as the early 1940s. By early 1943, seven school districts (Beatrice, Omaha, Grand Island, Columbus, Scottsbluff, Kearney and Rising City) were enrolled in a plan with a required minimum number of plan members. Those districts saw the benefit of a large pool of insured plan members.

Foundation for Statewide Plan

By 1959, state lawmakers allowed teachers to participate in group plans, and allowed school districts to pay all or part of the cost. Soon, more than 200 districts were participating in the NSEA-endorsed Blue Cross and Blue Shield group.

With the introduction of collective bargaining in the 1960s, for-

mal agreements began to include provisions for districts to share the cost of insurance premiums. A 1967 study by NSEA included the recommendation Blue Cross and Blue Shield for health care coverage in a new, statewide plan. That plan provided the same premium cost and same benefits for all the state's teachers and allowed teachers to continue coverage when they changed jobs within the state.

By the end of 1967, nearly 300 school districts had signed up. In 2000, the NSEA and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators joined to create and offer a plan under the Educators Health Alliance. Soon after, the Nebraska Association of School Boards joined the EHA management team. The original statewide model, forged largely at NSEA's behest, is the foundation for the plan still in use today.

The NSEA Edge

Dealing with questions like these can be daunting and time consuming. That's why it is best to call your NSEA organizational specialist to help you navigate such issues.

As your professional Association, NSEA has 18 field representatives, called organizational specialists, stationed around the state. They have teaching expertise, knowledge of Nebraska Department of Education rules and regulations, and an understanding of your school district.

NSEA's organizational specialists are well-versed in many issues, with particular expertise in bargaining and member rights issues where your employment might be threatened.

Whatever the question about your employment issues, classroom, bargaining situations or more, know that you can call your organizational specialist in complete confidentiality. Call your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047, or send your question through the 'Contact Us' feature of the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

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

'I See Classrooms Wherever I Go'

2010 National Teacher will Keynote Delegate Assembly

Sarah Brown Wessling was the 2010 National Teacher of the Year.

She has been Teacher Laureate for the Teaching Channel and serves on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

In April, she will add "keynote for the 2019 NSEA Delegate Assembly" to her list of speaking engagements. Through all this, and above all this, she says, she is a teacher.

"I see classrooms wherever I go. Some of them are familiar, like room 506 that I walk through in the morning," she said.

"Other times, my classrooms are convention centers or school gymnasiums. Sometimes I find myself in small-town media centers or classrooms in other countries," she said.

Wessling is a 20-year veteran of the high school English classroom, and teaches at Johnston, IA, a suburb of Des Moines. She maintains a hybrid classroom that keeps her in the classroom and allows her to write, speak and work on teacher leadership initiatives around the country.

Wessling will also offer two breakouts during the Friday evening series of professional development sessions. Her sessions are entitled *Mindsets for Learning: Elevating Everyone to the Status of Learner* and *Talking Their Way to Knowing: Creating Discussions that Teach Thinking*.

"Adding Sarah is certainly going to elevate the program," said NSEA President Jenni Benson. "She is a dynamic and exciting speaker as well as an exemplary educator."

Trauma, Concussions, Self-Care

Wessling's Delegate Assembly keynote will come on Friday evening, April 26, as a general session sandwiched in the middle of more than 30 breakout sessions offering professional development to delegates and non-delegate teachers alike.

While non-delegates may attend, they will be required to show valid and current identification as a teacher.

Among the topics on the Friday night agenda will be trauma-informed classrooms; challenging racism; concussion return to

the classroom protocol; self-care and resiliency for teachers; and Delegate Assembly 101. A complete listing will appear in the April edition of *The Voice*.

Sessions are also planned for Higher Education and retired members, the Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee and student members.

A hotel-sponsored mixer will close Friday evening in the General Assembly hall.



Learner: Iowa teacher Sara Brown Wessling, the 2010 National Teacher of the Year, says "learning is a little existential for me. There's always another boulder to push up a hill, always another struggle to scream through, always a sense of existence (that) comes from the lessons we're willing to learn." Wessling will keynote NSEA's 2019 Delegate Assembly.

Traditional Approach

The Saturday sessions will follow a more traditional agenda model, with delegates considering Association business.

Beginning in the morning, delegates will discuss and debate changes to Bylaws and any proposed new Resolutions or New Business Items. Dues for 2019-20 will be set.

For the uninitiated, Bylaws are the rules that guide the Association's operation. The 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 must be made 30 days in advance, and are due at NSEA by Thursday, March 28. Email those proposals to Benson at:

jenni.benson@nsea.org

New Business Items or amendments to Resolutions may be introduced in the Saturday morning, April 27, session. However, in order to be included in the printed delegate workbooks, these proposals must be submitted by Friday, April 5, to Benson.

Elections Planned

Delegates will also elect a Nebraska representative to the NEA Board of Directors. They will also elect to the NSEA Board of Directors at-large representatives for the Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee, Higher Education and Education Support Personnel.

All Delegate Assembly sessions are scheduled for the Marriott Cornhusker Hotel in downtown Lincoln.

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.

Vendors Support Delegate Assembly

These entities have given financial sponsorship to NSEA for the 2019 delegate Assembly:

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Nebraska
First Nebraska Credit Union
Midwest Choice Financial/Mary Oestmann
Horace Mann Companies
Marriott Cornhusker Hotel
NSEA-Retired

These vendors will host tables at the 2019 Delegate Assembly:

Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Nebraska
Brain Injury Alliance
California Casualty
Costco
Educators Health Alliance
Educators Health Alliance Wellness
Ethnic & Minority Affairs Committee
First Nebraska Credit Union
Horace Mann Companies

Mentor Nebraska
Midwest Choice Financial/Mary Oestmann
NEA Member Benefits
Nebraska Coaches Association
NSEA Children's Fund
NSEA University, including Praxis, Ed Rising & Leadership Institute
Student Education Association of Nebraska

Today is the day becoming a better educator means becoming a student.

**Choose from more than 50
online education programs.**

- Administration
- Early Childhood
- Library Science
- PK-12
- Special Education

**Enroll in a course or two
this summer.**

▼▼▼
online.nebraska.edu

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska

Online

KEARNEY | LINCOLN | OMAHA | MEDICAL CENTER

Andrea Hoopman
Science/Math Education, MS Ed
University of Nebraska at Kearney



NSEA University Gains ‘Star’ Power

Principal Gerry Brooks Included in Schedule for Summertime Super Meet

NSEA’s return to a full-fledged, full-service summer conference will include star power.

Celebrity elementary school principal Gerry Brooks will keynote the July 15-18 NSEA University — NSEA U for short — conference. He will also offer two of the nearly 180 breakout sessions planned for the conference.

Brooks has spent 20 years in education and is a passionate public speaker whose focus is on encouraging and helping teachers improve their instructional abilities. He has spoken to educational groups across the nation about encouraging teachers to improve their instruction through personal climate and culture strategies.

He’s also pretty funny.

For instance, Brooks has posted YouTube videos titled Backpack Contraband, Staff Bathroom Etiquette, The Field Trip Grinch and others. He will undoubtedly weave humor into his Nebraska keynote.

“Brooks will bring some humor to the program, but will also deliver a great message,” said NSEA President Jenni Benson. “His message is well-respected across the country.”

Brooks spent six years in the

classroom, two years as an intervention specialist and the past 12 years as a principal in Lexington, KY. More than 500,000 people follow Brooks on social media.

Under the Umbrella

It’s been more than 20 years since NSEA offered a summer conference, and this year’s NSEA U will combine the best of several Association components into one event at the Innovation Campus in Lincoln.

Under the NSEA U umbrella members will find the best of Advocacy Conference, highlighting bargaining issues; Leadership Institute, featuring skills and knowledge development for up-and-coming leaders; and membership meetings, allowing local leaders and members to collect membership materials while also taking advantage of some

of the professional development to be offered.

Many topics will be under the five provisions of NSEA’s strategic plan: bargaining and member rights, membership, politics, governance and social justice.

A training for local association presidents will take place on the Monday preceding the conference kickoff on Tuesday.

Watch for registration details in the next issue of The Voice, and on the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org



Proposals Sought for NSEA U Sessions

There will be up to 180 breakout sessions available to at NSEA University in Lincoln in July. Some of the topics under consideration for the agenda are shown below.

If you have a proposal for a professional development session that would be useful to your Association colleagues, go to the NSEA website, find the NSEA University story, and fill out the Request for Proposal form at that site. The NSEA website is at nsea.org.

Topics already under consideration include:

Organizing for Membership
Member Rights Scenarios
Bargaining Basics
Completing Your 2019-20 Comp Study
Financial Prep for Bargaining
Bargaining Lightning Round: 8 Topics
Trauma-Informed Schools
Challenging Racism
Educator Resiliency
Educator Ethics
Parliamentary Procedures
Social Justice: The Global Classroom
Important Role of ESPs in Education
Running for Association Office
Combating Institutional Racism
Restorative Justice Practices
Mindfulness for Educators
Higher Education Challenges
to Data Collection in Bargaining
Building Membership Capacity
in Higher Education Locals
Issues and Concerns Facing
Higher Education

What Do You Do if You Receive a RIF Notice?

The Answer is Simple: Call NSEA

It happens every year at Nebraska school districts large and small: a teacher receives a Reduction in Force notice – a pink slip – notifying the teacher that the last day of school is the teacher’s last day with the district.

With Nebraska schools facing tight budgets, RIFs are a fact of life across the state. The statutory deadline for school districts to hand out RIF notices is April 15.

The best way to deal with RIF notices is to be prepared. Here is NSEA’s tried

and true advice: If you receive a RIF notice, call NSEA immediately.

The moment you receive a RIF notice, a countdown begins. By state statute, you have only seven days in which to request a hearing to contest the notice.

While your situation may never reach an actual hearing, the best option is to act quickly by immediately giving NSEA a call. That will give you, your NSEA Organizational Specialist and NSEA’s Advocacy Department time to determine

what steps are in your best interest.

If you receive a notice, do two things immediately:

■ Fax a copy of the RIF notice to the NSEA at 1-402-475-2630.

■ Call your NSEA Organizational Specialist at 1-800-742-0047 to verify that the fax has arrived.

As always, if you have questions, contact your Organizational Specialist or NSEA’s Advocacy Office at 1-800-742-0047.

Coverage you can depend on for the ones you love.



As an eligible NEA member,* you've got the protection of **NEA Complimentary Life Insurance**, issued by **The Prudential Insurance Company of America** — but you should name a beneficiary to make sure your loved ones are covered. Go to **neamb.com/free-tote** and register your beneficiary to get this **FREE** tote. Or call **1-855-NEA-LIFE (632-5433)** and mention offer code: **TOTEBAG**

Visit **neamb.com/protect** to learn about all the solutions available to help meet your insurance needs.

nea *Members Insurance Trust*



*Visit us online or call for eligibility requirements.

NEA Members Insurance Trust is a registered trademark of the NEA Members Insurance Trust.
NEA Complimentary Life Insurance is issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America, Newark, NJ.
0302614-00002-00

DT300319

The Best Time to Buy Just About Anything!

Saving on Seasonal and Big-Ticket Items Can Add Up to Huge Savings Year-Round

By NEA Member Benefits

Need another way to stretch your budget? Plan your purchases ahead of time so you can buy during the most cost-effective times of the year. Do you have plans for both big and small purchases this year? Here's what shopping experts recommend.

Do Your Homework

Compare prices online so you'll "know the relative value of an item before you shop," says Kathy Borrus, author of *The Fearless Shopper: How to Get the Best Deals on the Planet*.

Once you know what an item is really worth, find out when the price of the product you're planning to buy is the cheapest.

"Deep discounts for some things still go by the calendar," says Mandy Walker, senior project editor for Consumer Reports. Note that when you shop month-long or longer sales, the selection is better the earlier in the month, says Walker, and prices are low or "bare bones" lowest near the end of the month.

Take Advantage of Tax Holidays

Save more by planning purchases to utilize state tax holidays—times when state sales taxes on certain items are dropped.

Many participating states' tax holidays are timed for back-to-school savings on items like clothing, computers, school supplies and books, but the list of items varies.

If you live in or near a participating state, your tax break could save four to seven percent, depending on the sales tax rate, says Carol Kokinis-Graves, JD, state sales and use tax analyst for Wolters Kluwer, CCH.

"Generally speaking, there are no residency requirements, so nonresidents can take advantage of neighboring state tax holidays," she said. For example, a teacher in Arizona who occasionally visits New Mexico could plan to buy eligible products during New Mexico's state sales tax holiday.

Tip: Be aware that other taxes could be in effect during a state tax holiday, Kokinis-Graves cautions. "Local jurisdictions often have the authority to impose their own sales and use taxes, and those localities may not join the state in providing a tax holiday."

Negotiate a Better Deal

Don't be afraid to ask for a better price, says Borrus. If you ask in a friendly manner, "Is this the best you can do?" or make an offer

that's lower than their lower price, "you might get a better deal." Negotiation works best in small stores where the owner may be eager to reduce inventory but it's worth trying at department stores too.

When you're shopping for books or school goods, "never pay full price without asking first if you can't get a discount," says Lyn Dunsavage Young, national media coordinator and schools specialist for Future Horizons, an Arlington, Texas-based publisher of books, DVDs and CDs on autism and related disorders.

Tip: Before you buy, check publisher or distributor's online prices. Often they're lower than catalog or store prices, she adds.

Ask for Volume Discounts

When ordering for a school, "you should be able to get at least a 20 percent discount" on the retail price of books and goods you purchase from the publisher or distributor "because of the volume in which most schools order," said Dunsavage Young.

Before you agree on a price, be sure to check the publisher's or distributor's online prices. Often they're lower than the same company's catalog or store prices.

Tip: If you're considering using a particular book for a class next semester, call and ask if you can have a free sample. "Most publishers and distributors will give you a book" knowing they'll increase their sales of that book when your department or bookstore reviews it, likes it and then orders it.

Tap Year-end Opportunities

The two best times to shop for your school are at the end of the school's fiscal year, usually June or July, and at Christmas, says Dunsavage Young.

Most publishers and distributors are willing to make fiscal year-end deals, knowing your funds are limited and must be spent before the end of the school year. "Tell them how much you have and what you want, and they'll most likely work with you, within your budget," she said.

Tip: At Christmas, book companies and distributors are trying to get rid of taxable inventory and "they'll ho-ho-ho all the way to the bank if you buy as much inventory as possible at this time of the year." You'll save on prices, they'll save on taxes. "Call and negotiate," Dunsavage Young suggests. "You'll be amazed what can be accomplished in the spirit of Christmas."

Use a Shopping Calendar

One example of a shopping calendar is published by Consumer Reports. According to their research, here are some examples of items to buy during a specific month:

- **January:** bedding and linens, winter clothing
- **March:** winter sports equipment
- **April:** spring clothing
- **May:** athletic shoes and apparel, camping and outdoor gear, cordless phones, mattresses
- **June:** summer sports gear, pots, pans and dishes
- **August:** air conditioners, backpacks, dehumidifiers
- **September:** shrubs, trees and perennials
- **October:** winter coats
- **November:** baby products
- **December:** large and small home appliances

However, many products are "best buys" in more than one month:

- **TVs:** January, March, November, December
- **Treadmills and elliptical trainers:** January, February
- **Humidifiers:** February, March
- **Laptop computers:** April
- **Desktop computers:** April, June, October
- **Digital cameras:** March, April, September, October
- **Camcorders:** June, July
- **Toys:** January, November, December
- **Small consumer electronics:** March, May, June, September, December
- **GPS navigators:** November, December
- **Snow blowers:** August, September
- **Lawn mowers:** April, May, September, October
- **Carpeting:** May, June
- **Indoor furniture:** February, June, July
- **Outdoor furniture:** June, July
- **Gas grills:** September, October
- **Swimwear:** June, July
- **Bikes:** September, October, November



Ready to take the next step in your career?

Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction

Provides K-12 teachers with specialized skills to enhance teaching and learning in their classrooms. Students choose Doane's program for:

- Coursework that is relevant and applicable.
- Faculty who believe educational professionals are lifelong learners.
- A curriculum that incorporates experience and knowledge, best practice, current research, application, and evaluation.



ENDORSEMENTS
Early Childhood
English as a Second Language
Mild/Moderate Special Education
Reading Specialist

COURSE LOCATIONS
Grand Island
Fairbury
Lincoln
Norris
Omaha
O'Neill
Online

Doane offers education degrees in:

- Curriculum and Instruction
- School Counseling
- Educational Leadership
- Education Specialist
- Doctorate in Education
- work toward an endorsement
- renew your certificate

Now accepting applications!

Please call the Graduate Education Office at 844.321.6642 for a schedule.

EARN YOUR SHIELD

402.467.9000 • 844.321.6642 • doane.edu

Finding the Right Balance



**Executive
Director Maddie
Fennell**

“

*...legislating to
either extreme
rarely produces
results that are
good for our
classrooms.*

”

Too often when we see legislative policies and proposals being discussed, they seem to tip the scale to one extreme or the other. You can pick up the newspaper or turn on the television news and hear about the stance of the far right or the far left. But legislating to either extreme rarely produces results that are good for our classrooms.

That's why NSEA reviews every education-related bill introduced in the Nebraska Legislature and looks to support those bills that, when passed, will create the balance needed to support a positive environment for teaching and learning.

The trio of bills I testified in support of on Monday, Feb. 11, offers a perfect example.

Changes to Discipline Bill

LB147, introduced by North Platte Sen. Mike Groene changes the Student Discipline Act in two basic ways.

First, it would allow school personnel to physically intervene when a student is a danger to themselves, others or school property. Current case law states that teachers can intervene to restrain the student without threat of being disciplined for corporal punishment. LB147 codifies those court rulings by stating in statute that school personnel can hold the hands, wrists, or torso of a student to control their movements when they are in danger of harming themselves, others or school property.

LB147 also says that school personnel must use reasonable care and not employ any mechanical device or binding. The NSEA is committed to working with Nebraska teachers to learn the safest and least restrictive means to physically intervene when there is danger.

Second, the bill allows a teacher to have a student removed from the classroom by an administrator, their designee or a school resource officer when the teacher has documented that the student has repeatedly interfered with the teacher's ability to maintain a learning environment or if the student's immediate behavior is so unruly, disruptive or abusive that it interferes with the learning of other students.

When a teacher cannot teach due to the continued misbehavior of a student, the teacher will be allowed to use his or her professional discretion to have that student removed by another adult. All involved will then be allowed a reasonable amount of time to come up with an intervention plan designed to prevent future disruptions and reintegrate that student into the learning environment.

Acting on Trauma

These are important and reasonable measures to make our classrooms safer for all.

As educators, we understand that many students who cause disruptions are acting out on trauma they have experienced in their own life. In fact, I am writing this from Washington, D.C., as I attend the Trauma Sensitive Schools (TSS) Conference. Through LEARN, the 501c3 NSEA established to fund professional development, we are working with a team of teachers to provide training on TSS throughout our state.

Proper Tools Needed

While we take a proactive approach, we must also have the tools necessary to make sure that we are using them wisely. To help with that balance, NSEA supports:

■ LB390, offered by Lincoln Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks, requires a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between school districts and law enforcement that includes certain basic requirements. Because School Resource Officers work with developing youth, it is important that they be trained to deal with a student population, including professional development in school-based law enforcement, student rights, understanding special needs students and students with disabilities, conflict de-escalation techniques, ethics for school resource officers, teenage brain development, adolescent behavior, diversity and cultural awareness, trauma-informed responses, and preventing violence in school settings.

■ LB495, introduced by Omaha Sen. Justin Wayne, will provide key information to help us examine whether school disciplinary measures and law enforcement interactions in Nebraska schools are being applied disproportionately to students by analyzing the various demographic indicators such as race/ethnicity, gender, grade level and whether the student has a learning or behavioral disability.

■ LB515, introduced by Omaha Sen. Tony Vargas, adds important clarity for students, parents and school personnel regarding the timelines and rights of students who are removed from class. LB515 delineates the time frames in which certain actions must be taken, clearly outlines that students charged with discipline violations must be allowed to complete class work and homework and provides needed consistency and greater equity in student discipline hearings.

It is important to give school personnel the authority to deal with disruptive students while also having protections in place to ensure that those resources are being used prudently and not disproportionately impacting groups of students, unintentionally causing harm to those we are trying to serve.

With our collective work and effort, we can make that happen to the benefit of educators, and most importantly, our students.

Winter's Monkey Wrench Fails to Deny

Lobby Day Succeeds Despite Winter Ice, Snow

Once again weather threw a monkey wrench into the plans for the annual NSEA-Retired Lobby Day at the State Capitol.

The Feb. 12 event was preceded a day earlier by foul winter weather. Snow mixed with ice and sleet dampened the attendance. Even so, more than 40 hardy souls made the supreme effort to attend and to talk with state senators in the State Capitol rotunda about issues of importance to education.

Among other issues, they lobbied senators on retirement issues, school funding and school discipline issues.

The morning began with NSEA-Retired President De Tonack presenting on key issues. NSEA Director of Public Policy and Legislative Research Jason Hayes described several vital legislative issues to participants, who then visited and presented facts and figures to the senators at the Capitol building across the street from the NSEA Headquarters.

The event concluded with lunch and remarks from Omaha Sen. Brett Lindstrom.

Spring Conference Sessions Finalized

Mark 'must attend' on the Thursday, April 25, square of your calendars.

NSEA-Retired members are again looking forward to the annual NSEA-Retired spring conference at Mahoney State Park near Ashland.

The morning will begin with refreshments and introductions followed by NSEA Associate Executive Director Neal Clayburn presenting on his long work and history with Boy Scouts in a presentation titled Scout Me In. The afternoon general session will feature Why Aging Brains Stay on the Sunny Side by the University of Nebraska's Dr. Maital Neta.

The day will include many breakout sessions, including The Power of Storytelling, Staying in Balance with Tai Chi, Mental Health is an Issue: Understanding At Risk Children, Saving with Your NEA Member Benefits, and Connecting with SEAN Student Members. There will also be an opportunity to visit with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska representatives. The day will include good food, many prizes and great conversations.

The conference is free to all members



Welcome to the Profession! Lincoln Education Association-Retired members recently packed 'Welcome to the Profession' baskets for new educators who joined the Lincoln Education Association. The baskets were packed with items such as staplers, highlighters, and note pads and were funded through a grant from NEA-Retired and with LEA-Retired donations. A similar project was initiated by the Omaha Education Association-Retired. From left are Arlene Rea, Linda Lannin, Linda Windle-Michel, Donna Wilson, Cheryl McMurtry and Margaret Rasmussen. Lannin and McMurtry organized the project.

with only a \$10 cost to guests.

One-day entry fee to Mahoney Park will be covered for participants. To register, go to nsea.org/retired and select Calendar, Events & Registrations. Deadline for registration is April 18. For additional questions, contact Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

rebecca.smith@nsea.org

Conference

An online refresher course on driving, such as AAA's Roadwise Driver, can help keep your driving knowledge fresh. Learn how to avoid road rage and aggression, get tips for becoming a good defensive driver, and more. Visit:

SeniorDriving.AAA.com

Tax Code Tips

At a recent meeting of the Omaha Education Association-Retired, Bridget O'Malley Tynan gave members tips on changes in the tax code that were part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act passed by Congress in late 2017. Several changes that could affect retirees were outlined at the meeting. Three main changes are:

- The standard deduction has been nearly doubled to \$12,000 for single filers, \$24,000 for married filing jointly.

- The personal exemption has been eliminated.

- Allowable itemized deductions have been severely restricted. For example, there is no longer a deduction for home equity interest; state and local tax

deductions are limited to \$10,000; you will not be able to file miscellaneous itemized deductions.

You may be able to still itemize your deductions if you have a home mortgage, have high medical expenses, or like to contribute to charities.

She advised members to consider having required minimum distributions (RMDs) from IRAs or 403(b) accounts sent to a charitable organization, rather than taking the RMD and then making the same donation to charity. She is a tax specialist for Tax Help, LLC, in Omaha.

— De Tonack, President
NSEA-Retired



**Elect
Margie Nowak**
to the
NSEA-R Board,
Capitol District

NET Writing Contest is for Early Elementary

Students across Nebraska can showcase their creative writing and drawing skills by participating in the 2019 NET PBS KIDS Writer's Contest.

The contest, sponsored by NET, Nebraska's PBS and NPR Stations, is open to all Nebraska students in kindergarten through third grade. Winners will be eligible to win a variety of prizes, including a Kindle Fire and a visit from a PBS KIDS character. First, second and third place winners will be selected from each grade level.

Submitted stories can be fact, fiction, prose or poetry and must include at least five original color illustrations.

Entries must be postmarked by March 31 and received by April 5. For more contest details and helpful writing resources, visit:

netnebraska.org/write

Juvenile Services Conference in April

The two-day Heartland Juvenile Services Association annual conference is scheduled for the Omaha Hilton in early April.

Keynote speaker will be Ross Szabo, an author who has spent more than half his life looking for ways to make mental health approachable for everyone. His keynote address will look at Creating a Life-Changing Connection.

Szabo consults with companies, colleges, high schools and other organizations that need assistance finding ways to reach people with a mental health message. He has also authored a book, "Behind Happy Faces: Taking Charge of Your Mental Health."

Also on the agenda is Dr. Matt Bellace, who owns a PH.D in clinical neuropsychology. He is a contributing author for the National Geographic Kids book series *This or That*. He brings a humorous focus to how educators can help foster skills such as self-control, resilience and fitness.

The pre-conference is set for Wednesday, April 10, at 6:30 p.m., with the full conference to run Thursday, April 11. Bellace will present on Friday morning, April 12.

For details, go to:

www.hjsaonline.com

Plum Creek Reads Again!

Seward Literacy Agenda Again Features Bestselling Authors

The 24th Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival Adult Conference will be held Saturday, Sept. 21, on Concordia University's campus in Seward. Teachers, administrators, media specialists and book lovers are invited to hear visiting authors and illustrators, as well as literacy experts.

Featured best-selling authors and illustrators this year are Sarah Albee, Ben Clanton, Kate DiCamillo, Rita Williams Garcia, Lita Judge, Alan Katz, Kate Messner, Wendell and Florence Minor, Barbara O'Connor, Lin Oliver, Jason Reynolds, Lori Richmond, Matt Tavares, Duncan Tonatiuh, Stephen Savage, and Jacqueline Woodson. DiCamillo, Williams Garcia and Woodson are Newberry Honor medalists. Reynolds and DiCamillo are Newberry Award medalists.

DiCamillo will be the author luncheon speaker. Her topic is, "Why Do Writers Write? A Story About a Story." Only 400 tickets are available, and it is expected to sell out quickly.

Literacy expert Matt Glover will

present on teaching writing. Dr. Penny Kittle will talk on middle and secondary literacy pedagogy. "The Book Whisperer" Donalyn Miller will present, as will Dr. Molly Ness, on "think alouds."

Other professionals will speak on topics including writing children's books, incorporating picture books in the secondary classroom, developing resilient readers, and integrating play with literacy.

Registration, book sales and autographing begin at 7:30 a.m. The first session begins at 9 a.m. The final session begins at 3 p.m. Authors will autograph after the last session. Book sales will remain open.

A keynote by National Ambassador for Young People's Literature Jacqueline Woodson will close the day.

A special exhibit, Fun at the Farm, will be on display at the Marxhausen Gallery on the campus. The gallery is open from Aug. 21 to Oct. 2. Hours are Monday through Friday 11 a.m.–4 p.m., and weekends from 1–4 p.m. There is no admission fee.

Conference registration is \$99, which includes the author luncheon. For details, call Dylan Teut at 402-643-7483. Find registration at:

www.cune.edu/plumcreek

A 'Crisis of Disrupted Learning'

Oregon Teachers Offer Report on Status of Unmet Student Needs

The Oregon Education Association has released a report on the crisis of disrupted learning in classrooms in that state.

"Our schools are in crisis all across the state," said John Larson, high school English teacher and president of the Oregon Education Association.

"Students come to school with intense unmet needs that impact their learning at school – such as hunger, homelessness, unmet mental health needs, and traumatic events at home. Without adequate resources to support our students, these challenges result in frequent, severe disruptions and outbursts that take time away from learning and affect all of our students."

The report, A Crisis of Disrupted

Learning, shares perspectives from hundreds of educators and education stakeholders around Oregon. The Oregon Education Association, in partnership with the Oregon Department of Education, hosted 14 forums and heard from hundreds of participants online.

The report includes broad information about the issue, including its causes, its effects and suggested recommendations to make improvements.

Among the recommendations:

- Increase onsite student supports with a focus on mental health.
- Reduce class sizes and caseloads.
- Decrease prescriptive academic requirements.
- Clarify physical intervention and restraint protocols.
- Improve principal leadership and support.

For the full report, go to:

oregoned.org/whats-new/a-crisis-of-disrupted-learning

Cal Casualty Offers Arts Grants

There is help ahead for Nebraska public school music, art and performance programs.

California Casualty has introduced \$250 Music and Arts Grants to help pay for art materials, music and other necessities.

The grant is designed to foster creativity for choir, band, dance, film, theater, computer arts and graphics – or for any K-12 curriculum that employs art for learning.

California Casualty has been serving educators since 1951 and understands the importance of music and arts education. Numerous studies have concluded that sharing a love of the arts enhances students' brain development, creativity and classroom involvement.

California Casualty grant dollars must be used to subsidize music and arts programs or projects in the classroom. Applicants must be a current member, or referred by a current member of NSEA. A pilot program in 2018 helped fund ukuleles at a Kenydale (WA) Elementary School; uniforms, robes and instruments for Edison (MN) High School choir and band members; and sketch books and art supplies for Highland Park (KS) Central Elementary School.

The entry deadline is June 30, with grants awarded in September. Apply at:

www.calcasmusicartsggrant.com

Speaking of Education

"Genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration."

— *Thomas Edison,
Inventor,
1847-1931*

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

The Talkative Classroom

From Kate Ortiz, a mentor teacher from Iowa:

"If the class as a whole talks too much, I have had good results with talking to them as a group and explaining that other class sections are able to accomplish more in the same amount of time and that the talking is interfering with their learning. I create a plan with them. It is helpful if they know at the beginning of class what needs to be accomplished during that period. I post it on the board and try to always include time in which they work with others on a task.

"Then when they talk and I have to wait for their attention, I mark a tally on the board. I don't

say anything because they are aware of the plan and know what the tallies mean. I watch the clock and mark another tally every 30 seconds that I have to wait. Each tally equals a minute that is subtracted from their partner time, meaning they will work alone or not have class time to do the task at all if they continue talking and use up the task time.

"Students generally begin to remind each other, especially if they end up having homework or missing fun activities because of the time lost. I also make a point of complimenting their progress at the end of the class period or the beginning of the next class. They will usually need several experiences with this before progress is seen, so don't give up!"



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



Birthday Celebration: In observance of Lincoln's Birthday on Feb. 12, the Nebraska Rangers unit of the Sons of Union Veterans of Civil War presented the colors to open that day's session of the Nebraska Legislature. Among the re-enactors was NSEA Associate Executive Director Neal Clayburn. From left are Clayburn, Larry Angle, Gage Stermensky, Eric Bachenberg, Jim Atkins and Lt. Keith Rockefeller.