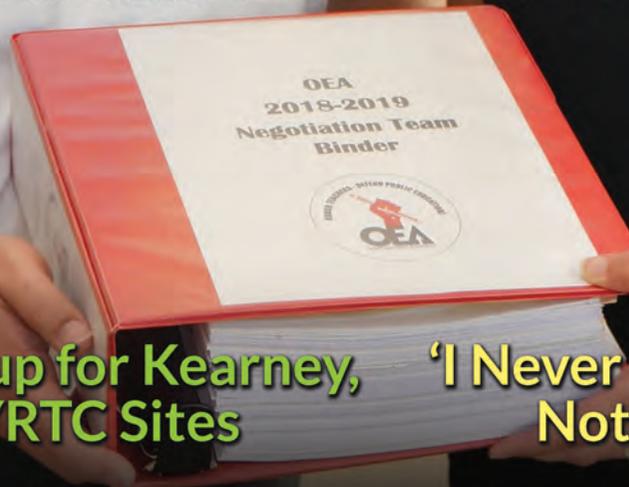


# The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • November 2019

“We Had the Math.”

*It All Came Down to the Numbers.*



**NSEA Stands up for Kearney,  
Geneva YRTC Sites**

**'I Never Thought About  
Not Belonging'**

**2020-21 EHA Rates Set**

**Teachers are Hurting**



# THE VOICE

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## A Great Public School for Every Child.

# Teen Driving Program Goal is to Improve Safety

## Teens in the Driver Seat Uses Peer-to-Peer Programming to Enhance Driving Safety

Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) is the nation's first peer-to-peer safety program for young drivers, involving teenagers directly in developing and delivering driving safety messages.

Nebraska's TDS peer-to-peer school-based program has grown from five schools in 2013 to 36 high schools and three junior high schools in 2019. Through funding received from the Nebraska Department of Transportation's Highway Safety Office (NDOT-HSO) and Drive Smart Nebraska



Coalition partners, this program is available to Nebraska schools at no cost.

"We are really making great strides and we want to continue to grow the program by reaching out to teachers at the local level. This is where the work happens," said Jeanne Bietz, TDS state coordinator. TDS schools receive technical assistance, traffic safety materials, and educational opportunities to support the TDS goal of reducing crashes involving young drivers.

The program is an example of teen leadership in action. Teens in each participating school make a difference by discussing traffic topics such as seat belt use, distractions, speeding, night-time, drowsy and impaired driving. Community education and educating peer-to-peer provides a hands-on experience while working toward a common goal: injury reduction due to traffic crashes.

Success is verified by numbers. The six Nebraska schools that have five years of consecutive data show a four point reduction in the number of students who rode in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, a 10-point reduction in the number of students who drove a vehicle with passengers who did not wear a seat belt, and an 11-point reduction in the number of students who drove without wearing a seat belt.

"While teen drivers make up just seven percent of all licensed drivers across the state, they accounted for 21 percent of all reported crashes in 2017. This program works," said Mark Segerstrom, NDOT-HSO administrator. "Analysis of the program indicate cell phone use/texting decreased 30 percent at 'program schools' as compared to a control group of schools where the program was never deployed."

To inquire about becoming a TDS school or for more details, contact Bietz at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Injury Prevention Program at 402-471-0361, or at:

[jeanne.bietz@nebraska.gov](mailto:jeanne.bietz@nebraska.gov)

## Would You Like to Write for The Voice?

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

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

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

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

**On the Cover:** The last round of negotiations for members of the Omaha Education Association were difficult, to say the least. OEA President Robert Miller and Chief Negotiator Molly Davies explain why beginning on page 7.

# Information Fuels Our Service



**NSEA President  
Jenni Benson**

“

*By supporting members in this way, NSEA is more committed than ever to our students.*

”

I spend a great deal of time driving along the highways and byways of Nebraska, meeting with members, talking with them about their concerns, their needs, their hopes and dreams.

When I return to NSEA Headquarters I share what I have learned with leadership and staff. It is only with that continual intake of information that we at NSEA are able to stay on top of member needs, are able to update plans and responses, and are able to keep our approach to meeting the needs of members fresh and worthy of their dues investment.

We have other staff on the road doing much the same work in their day-to-day duties. For instance, our 18 organizational specialists are constantly meeting with members and updating our understanding of what we need to do to be of service.

For the past few years, we have also used the NEA-originated New Educator Campaign to collect information about member needs. The key to the campaign is a small card we ask new hires across the state to complete each year. The cards simply ask for teachers to rank their professional concerns, and to supply contact details. That simple ask is a tremendously wonderful way for us to get a clear understanding of the immediate and important needs of members and potential members.

Using those details, we can focus on providing professional support in specific areas. The Top 10 most important issues in the 2019 batch of New Educator Campaign responses were these concerns:

- Meeting the needs of students in poverty.
- Classroom management (e.g., student behavior, relationships).
- Family and community engagement.
- Working with families.
- Salary.
- Educator rights and responsibilities.
- Student debt and/or finances.
- Health care and benefits.
- Education policy.
- Social and racial justice.

This data is shared with staff and local and state leaders to plan engagement activities for

our members. Whether PK-12, Higher Ed, ESP or Aspiring Educator, NSEA is working to meet the needs of our members. You can count on seeing the topics above on the agenda for NSEA activities, events and messages in the coming months.

By supporting our members in this way, NSEA is more committed than ever to our students.

## A 48-Year Member

During my recent travels, I was fortunate to visit members of the Wheeler Central Education Association in Bartlett. I enjoyed my time at that school, and on the way out of Bartlett I had a moment to stop by the Herb Mignery Sculpture Garden.

A native of Bartlett, Mignery is a western-themed illustrator, author and sculptor and is known around the globe. Several of his bronze sculptures are on display in Bartlett.

While I was in the sculpture garden, I met Kathy Rakness, a member of the Central Valley Education Association. Upon introducing myself, Rakness said “I’ve been a member for 48 years!” Rakness teaches art and is the head girls track and cross country coach for the Greeley-based school. She said she hoped to make it to 50 years in the classroom. That is an

amazing and admirable goal.

It also speaks well to her understanding of the value of membership in her professional association.

## A ‘Blue’ President

My journeys this past month also have been very personal.

If you’ve processed through the True Colors program, you’ll understand what I mean when I say “I am blue.” This coloring is reflected very much in my heartfelt desire to help people. This past month I have worked with members and friends who are struggling with health and trauma issues. I hear the struggles and the concerns and I want you to know I am here to help; NSEA is here to help. Please do not hesitate to reach out.



**On the Ground in Bartlett:** NSEA President Jenni Benson, left, poses with Central Valley Education Association member Kathy Rakness.



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# EHA Approves '20-21 Premium Rates

## Deductibles Steady in Most Plans; Increase Averages 3.8% for 10 Yrs.

There will be an overall increase of 6.71 percent in premiums next year for the medical and dental insurance plans used by nearly every Nebraska school district, after action by the Educators Health Alliance (EHA) in late October.

The rate will affect premiums for the 2020-21 school year. Medical insurance rates will increase 6.97 percent and dental rates 2 percent, resulting in an overall premium increase of 6.71 percent.

When the plan year begins on Sept. 1, 2020, it will mark the 18th consecutive increase of less than 10 percent. The average increase over the past 10 years has been just 3.8 percent.

“While medical inflation and an increase in taxes has resulted in a higher increase than last year, the Board has worked diligently to manage the plan and is pleased to have kept the average increase under 4 percent for the last decade,” said Sheri Jablonski, EHA chair. She noted that five times in the past 10 years the increase has been less than 3 percent.

The EHA is a consortium of the NSEA, the Nebraska Association of School Boards, and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators.

### Wellness Plan Works

Jablonski said the single digit increase is made possible by:

- A program to assist in management of chronic diseases;
- Holding the line on health and administrative increases;
- Prudent management in the design and choices of benefit plans, and;
- The positive effect of the EHA’s statewide wellness and health promotion program.

“EHA’s wellness program has been instrumental in improving the health of EHA-covered employees,” she said.

While the 2020-21 plans include modest increases in physician

### EHA Rate Increases

A history of rates for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield plan, managed by the EHA Board of Directors, shows rate increases have been well below the national average:

2010-11:.....	4.56%
2011-12:.....	0.00%
2012-13:.....	2.99%
2013-14:.....	6.40%
2014-15:.....	2.30%
2015-16:.....	1.91%
2016-17.....	4.90%
2017-18:.....	7.99%
2018-19:.....	0.00%
2019-20.....	4.99%
2020-21:.....	6.97%

and pharmacy copays, deductibles remain the same for all plans except the \$3,500 deductible HSA plan. That plan will have a \$100 increase to \$3,600 due to the plan’s absence of pharmacy and prescription copays. All plans will have a modest increase in out-of-pocket maximums except the \$4,000 HSA plan, which will have a slight out-of-pocket maximum decrease.

### Single-Digit Increases

As the board evaluated possible benefit changes, it compared EHA benefit changes with employer surveys and found that most employers modified benefits each year, said Beth Kernes Krause, EHA vice chair and Auburn Public Schools Board of Education member.

“Over the last 9 years, the average employer surveyed reduced benefits by 13 percent. The EHA benefit reduction over the same time period was less than 6 percent,” she said. “The board felt it appropriate to increase physician and pharmacy copays since it had been several years since either

of these copays were changed.”

The EHA Board has taken action to help manage the plan and provide a proper balance between premium increases and benefit changes, said NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell.

“We believe these changes will allow the EHA to continue to see single digit rate increases in the future,” she said.

John Spatz, executive director of the Nebraska Association of School Boards said the EHA board understands financial concerns of educators and the fiscal constraints facing school districts.

“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,” said Spatz.

“Board members take the responsibility for plan oversight very seriously,” said Dr. Mike Dulaney, executive director of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. “The rate increase and benefit decisions for the coming plan year were well thought out and were thoroughly discussed prior to the board reaching a decision.”

# American Education Deserves Celebration

For 152 years, your Nebraska State Education Association has advocated for students and worked to support teachers.

For nearly two-thirds of that time, — since 1921 — NSEA has celebrated American Education Week along with other educators across the country. The 99th observance of American Education Week is planned for later this month, and Nebraska educators are urged to celebrate.

“We should all celebrate the teaching and learning profession in some way,” said NSEA President Jenni Benson. “America’s education system is unique in the world and serves as the foundation for all we do in this country.”

American Education Week will be celebrated this year during the week of Nov. 18-22, and will feature a day to honor teachers, parents, education support profession-



als and substitute teachers.

As a member of the NSEA, you belong to the parent organization – the National Education Association – that worked to found American Education Week nearly 100 years ago. The NEA has a schedule, artwork, handout cards and more to assist with your celebrations. Here is the schedule for the week:

- **Monday, Nov. 18:** Kickoff Day. Encourage students, staff and parents to cel-

brate great public schools.

- **Tuesday, Nov. 19:** Parents Day. Invite parents and family members to school for a first-hand look at a typical school day.

- **Wednesday, Nov. 20:** Education Support Professionals Day: Wear #Red-ForEd to recognize and celebrate ESPs who meet needs of the whole student.

- **Thursday, Nov. 21:** Educator for a Day. Encourage elected officials and community leaders to serve as “educators for a day” for a hands-on school experience.

- **Friday, Nov. 16:** Substitute Educators Day. Honor and celebrate educators who are called on to substitute for regular classroom teachers in their absence.

For details about American Education Week, and for a look at the artwork, go to:

[www.nea.org/aew](http://www.nea.org/aew)



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**Price is Not Right:** At one public bargaining session between the Omaha Education Association and the Omaha Public Schools, educators filled out price tags indicating how much more they could earn at a nearby school district, or how much of their own salary they had spent on supplies to date during the 2018-19 school year. From left are Omaha teachers Halley Taylor, Jared Ganley, Ann Maass and Mako Jacobs.

# ‘We Had the Math’

## In Stubborn Negotiation Talks, OEA Relies on NSEA Numbers, Advice

It was going to be an uphill struggle. Last fall’s opening round of contract talks for the 4,000-plus educators represented by the Omaha Education Association made that abundantly clear.

Over a six-month period, OEA leaders endured unrealistic contract offers, tearful members and head-spinning amounts of data.

When the dust settled and a contract was signed, it had boiled down to math.

Calculations by NSEA staff, the accomplished skills of NSEA legal and bargaining experts, and support of NEA affiliate staff in other states led OEA to secure a two-year contract.

“I never doubted that NSEA backed us,” said OEA Chief Negotiator Molly Davies. “But when things really started mov-

ing, I understood the importance of the relationship between OEA, the NSEA and the NEA like never before. It became clear as day to me.”

Such support was needed and welcomed. Association leaders were seeking a contract that would show teachers they

were valued and that their district would work to retain educators, rather than let them slip away to suburban districts where salaries are higher, especially for mid-career educators.

Negotiations did not start well. Despite OEA’s good-faith effort to begin on time and to collaborate, district negotiators delayed the opening round until six weeks after the statutory start date, and then took a hard stance with a stark opening offer to freeze all salary and schedule movement. The initial offer further mandated that any increase in health insurance premiums would be absorbed by district



**The Final Product:** Omaha Education President Robert Miller and Chief Negotiator Molly Davies display the red notebook-clad final contract.

## Unique Situation Allowed Extended Talks

### State Aid Certification Delay Moves Completion Date

During the early months of 2012, when the Nebraska Legislature considered changes to statutes governing the Nebraska Commission on Industrial Relations, there was some discussion of eliminating the then 65-year-old court that had settled scores of labor-management disputes over the years.

Fortunately, NSEA was closely engaged in the discussions between key state senators. Rather than eliminate the commission, the result of those talks was LB347. Language in LB347 set forth a strict schedule for bargaining of contracts for K-12 education employees.

Up to that point, contract talks between a school district and local education association might begin as late as July, just weeks before the school year opened. It was not unusual for those talks to extend well into the school year that was the subject of negotiations.

Today, LB347 dictates that there must be no fewer than four negotiations meetings between Nov. 1 and Feb. 8 — unless a settlement is reached.

If the parties have not concluded talks by Feb. 8, fact-finding and mediation is required through a resolution officer, with the resolution officer choosing the most reasonable final offer on each issue in dispute.

The negotiations, fact-finding and mediation period ends on March 25 — unless the Legislature has not yet certified state aid to K-12 schools. That's just what happened this year: the extension of that window allowed the OEA-OPS negotiations and mediation process to extend into May. The Legislature delayed the state aid certification date to June 10, which theoretically would have allowed any local association/school district mediation to extend into early July. The extension allows school districts additional time to consider the effect of a new contract on budgeting for the coming school year.

employees, froze the contract's long-term service increments, and made proposals on any single contract issue contingent on OEA acceptance of the district's freeze.

The draconian offer was likely in reaction to the district's projected \$10 million 2019-20 budget shortfall at the time, as well as a \$25.5 million state-mandated payment to an underfunded pension system.

For OEA, the offer was a non-starter. "It put us in a position of not really being able to tentatively agree to anything, because we were never going to accept their financial package," Davies said.

The freeze would have meant a loss of income for every member of the bargaining unit. Buoyed by overt support from members and logistical and technical support from NSEA and NEA, leadership at OEA stood strong, even when — on February 8, the deadline day for concluding bargaining — district negotiators unilaterally declared impasse. That declaration sent talks down a trickier path, leaving few options for settlement.

### Research Matters

Davies, OEA President Robert Miller and the OEA team had approached negotiations with two clear understandings. First, a comparability study indicated OPS salaries were below those of educators in comparable school districts. Second, OPS was losing teachers to smaller, neighboring districts.

The NSEA study showed OPS salaries were below the average of comparable districts and well below the Commission of Industrial Relations' (CIR) 98 percent threshold for hearing salary disputes. A freeze would drop OPS further behind those districts.

Results of an OEA survey of bargaining unit members uncovered other worries, said Miller.

"Our bargaining unit members

expressed strong concern about teacher retention and valuing mid-career and veteran teachers, as well as ensuring training, retaining and caring for new teachers," he said. "The message we shared, based on our survey, was that our teachers did not feel the district valued their ability to educate leaders for tomorrow."

### Third Time, No Charm

Pursuant to state statute, the OEA-OPS bargaining ground rules allow either side to request public session bargaining.

Late afternoon starts allowed OEA members to attend, and as meetings were held with little progress, attendance grew. At a third meeting with no progress foreseen, OEA walked out.

"We endeavored to negotiate fairly," said Miller. "District negotiators would caucus, come back to the table, and would not move."

That approach led to frustration, Miller said. By the end of that third session, the OEA team took its 30-minute caucus, returned to the table and expressed that frustration.

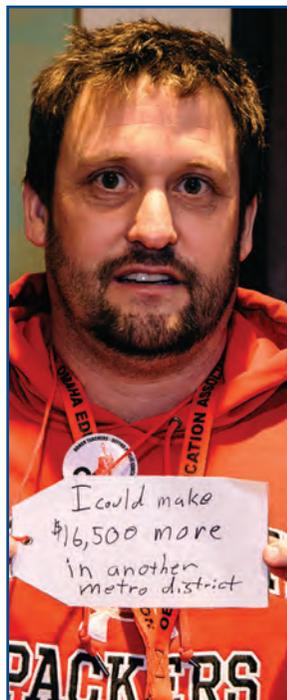
"Our team discussed the district's offer, I wrote a response, we delivered the response and walked out," said Davies.

That drew attention. Nearly 350 teachers attended the next session. So did news media. A couple of school board members stopped by.

### Price Tags and T-Shirts

"Word got out about what we were doing and how we were being treated at the table. More teachers began to show up," said Miller. Social media was "huge" in that respect, he said.

After each session, Davies updated members via video on social media. Two or three OEA members were assigned to provide live social media updates during the talks — with explicit direction to include context and exact quotes.



**Expenses and Salaries:** Cathy Scurlock, left, and Jack Bangert, right, were among OEA members attending the OEA-OPS public bargaining sessions last school year. Bangert has since left OPS for an administrative position in Falls City.

Getting immediate messages to members drove member turnout as well as gave members a sense of their value and importance, said Miller.

“It showed the membership that they are an integral piece of the process, that it’s not just the table team,” he said.

At the March school board meeting, members were given “price tags” and wrote down how much of their own cash they had spent in the classroom to that point in the year. Some also indicated how much more they could make at another metro-area school district. “Those tags sent a powerful message,” said Miller.

Wearing red t-shirts was also powerful, said Davies. NSEA provided 3,000 red ‘I Stand with Teachers’ t-shirts.

“Wearing red made a difference. When we went to impasse and the NSEA bought us all those t-shirts, that was a big deal,” said Davies.

Unexpected support came from many stakeholders in the educational community within the district.

“Individuals wore their ‘I Stand with Teachers’ shirts to show solidarity to the OEA and their union brothers and sisters. This support continued to fuel our passion to continue the fight to make all educators feel valued in their careers,” said Miller.

When bargaining had not yet concluded in late April, OEA leaders printed postcards addressed to OPS board members and asked 300 members at NSEA’s Delegate Assembly to write notes in support of OEA on the back. At a school board meeting on May 6 – still with no settlement – board members noted, at least one doing so angrily, that they were getting postcards from educators from Omaha to Scottsbluff.

“They were aware that people not only from Omaha, but from around the state, supported our teachers,” said Miller.

### ‘Head-Spinning’ Work

The district’s February declaration of impasse drew



**Comparing the Numbers:** At a training on NSEA’s Navigator comparability program last year, Bryan Regier of Hyannis, left, and Ed Ankrom of Beatrice, center, consult with NSEA Collective Bargaining Specialist Randy Gordon.

## Comparability Studies Give Locals an Edge at Bargaining Table

Comparability studies are the tested measure by which K-12 local education associations can determine how their total compensation and district’s total costs compare with schools within a given geographic array of comparably-sized school districts.

For more than two decades, NSEA has trained local association negotiators in using the NSEA-licensed Navigator program to generate this assessment. The results of the Excel-based program have been successfully used time and again to support and settle wage disputes filed with the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR). In fact, most trained local associations are able to use their comparability study data to settle with their school district.

Navigator assesses comparability by:

- Using geographic and enrollment standards to generate a potential array of school districts within a given geographic area, as well as with enrollments no more than half as small or twice as large.

- Gathering compensation information for those “peer” schools, as well as the subject school conducting the study.

- Collecting data about each member of the bargaining unit’s degree level, educational hours, level of insurance eligibility, full-time/part-time status and years of teaching experience. Those details are used to place staff on peer school salary schedules and benefits. By comparing the outcomes of those placements under peer school conditions of employment, the array is ordered to identify how far the subject school may be above or below the array midpoint, in salary, total compensation and total costs.

Over the past year, more than 50 local associations have worked closely with NSEA to learn the program at regional and small group trainings, as well as at NSEA University. Dozens more negotiators are licensed to use the program, having been trained previously, and generate their own analysis in preparation for negotiations.

Your NSEA organizational specialist will alert your team to next summer’s upcoming trainings, so rally your team to attend a 2020 Navigator event. Questions? Call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

## From South Sioux City to Kimball: NSEA has Assisted

**NSEA’s Collective Bargaining Department, with assists from NSEA’s 18 organizational specialists, has helped 50 local education associations conduct comparability studies for 2020-21 bargaining talks that begin this month. Those locals comprise nearly one in five of the 275 bargaining units represented by NSEA. Here is a list of local associations that finished studies for 2020-21 contracts:**

Alliance	Elba	Holdrege	Morrill	South Sioux City
Auburn	Elkhorn	Humboldt-Table	Nebraska City	Southern
Axtell	Elkhorn Valley	Rock-Steinauer	Neligh-Oakdale	Sterling
Banner County	ESU No. 7	Hyannis	Norfolk	St. Edward
Bayard	Fremont	Johnson-Brock	North Platte	Tekamah-
Bellevue	Grand Island	Kimball	Ogallala	Herman
Blair	Northwest	Lexington	Omaha	Thayer Central
Centennial	Gretna	Madison	Osmond	Twin River
Chase County	Harvard	Malcolm	Palmer	Valley County
Cozad	Hemingford	Minden	Plattsmouth	York
Crete	Hershey	Mitchell	Schuyler	

varied reactions.

“We had one young woman, an English teacher who followed the process closely, actually burst into tears because she felt so devalued,” said Davies.

The bigger sense was one of momentum.

“Members were grateful we didn’t fold. I think that steeled our nerves. I think it helped us move forward because they gave us the physical presence of understanding that they wanted us to push it,” she said.

Soon after the impasse declaration, OEA leaders were working with NSEA Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan, Collective Bargaining Specialist Randy Gordon and NSEA attorney Scott Norby. Veterans of bargaining battles, all had been involved to some degree or had monitored talks closely. Their first order of business was to update the comparability study, a massive data collection project. The process compared OEA salary and benefit schedules to those factors in nine similar-sized school districts in seven states. NSEA staff, including Guinan, Gordon, Organizational Specialist Liz Figueroa and Collective Bargaining Associate Natalie Thomason went to work. With assists from association staff in the nine comparable locals, NSEA turned the study in three weeks. Davies called the process “head-spinning.”

Meanwhile, after declaring impasse, OPS went to the extra expense of a private legal firm to move forward. Norby worked with an attorney from that firm to find a suitable resolution officer.

Impasse turns negotiations over to the CIR. The first option is for a mutually accepted resolution officer (RO) to take testimony from both sides during a one-day session. After an initial briefing, the RO shuttles proposals back and forth between parties, encouraging compromise. Ultimately, both sides can reach and accept a compromise, or either side can end talks and continue to the CIR. Settling at the RO stage is typically the better option, said Gordon.

“Most want the RO to resolve it. At that point, you still have some say in the matter, some control,” he said. “Once the CIR takes it under advisement, the two sides have no choice but to accept and live with the CIR ruling.”

### ‘We Had The Math’

As the comparability study was underway and while the RO selection process began, OEA leaders were strategizing with NSEA’s staff, attorney and leadership.

“Scott and Trish were excellent at communicating. I grew to appreciate tremendously the work they do,” said Davies.

Norby’s 30-plus years of working with the CIR was a clear advantage. He provided weekly updates and was readily available for consultation. There were hours-long meetings at

his office. Davies said Norby did not attempt to “engineer the train” but rather provided options. “It was a healthy space for honest, academic and intellectual debate about what we were doing, while taking into account all of the emotional pieces and how it would land on our members,” she said.

That was the mid-February to early May environment. The one-day hearing before the RO took place on May 9. The two parties met for instructions from the RO, and then separated. The RO shuttled offers back and forth.

At that point, math took over: the comparability study clearly favored OEA. “I think the hearing officer went back to them and said whatever proposals they were offering “would not be received lightly, so come up with a better proposal,”” said Miller.

More to the point, said Davies, “we had the math.”

OEA also had the expertise of Guinan and Norby in the room. “Scott understands the process better than anyone in the state,” said Miller.

### ‘An Act of Solidarity’

Eventually, the RO returned with an OPS concept proposal worthy of consideration. The district was willing to offer salary increases but sought drastic reductions in district costs for family plan health care. “We did not agree to those drastic cuts to the family plan, but negotiated up from there,” said Davies. “It

was enough to keep us from deciding to go to the CIR.”

Final details included a \$350 increase on base salary for 2019-20, and a \$1,000 base increase the following year. No one could recall a one-year base increase of that size at OPS.

In addition, said Guinan, salary schedule movement was allowed for all certified staff, as was long-term service movement. Guinan said allowing such broad movement and money on the base was a departure from past OPS-OEA practice.

That long-term service increments were maintained, much less with movement, brought one active member to tears, said Miller. “She thought we had averted disaster and was appreciative of the team for their hard work,” he said.

The downside: Members will pay the increase in health insurance premiums for the 2020-21 Association year.

A second downside, said Miller, was that approval came without a vote on ratification. The OEA team had to accept or reject the proposal or see the dispute move to the CIR.

“That’s a hard one for the membership to understand,” he said. “But we had to tell the RO that day whether we were moving forward.”

The process led OEA members to have a better understanding of where their dues dollars go, said Davies.

“That had not been at the forefront of their minds before, and that was a palpable shift. Folks that really pay attention in our membership really got it: we’re connected,” she said.

“Paying dues is an act of solidarity that I think became a lot clearer to folks who were involved in the process.”



**Big Numbers!** Omaha Education Association members Erin Solheim, left, and Sara Newman, right, display the amount of personal resources they had spent on school supplies by early spring of the 2018-19 school year.

# NSEA Teacher Salary Update

## Nebraska Moves Up in Standings, Work by Negotiations Teams ‘Outstanding’

Nebraska teachers are doing reasonably well – at least when it comes to national rankings.

The National Education Association’s annual Ranking of the States 2019 calculates that the average salary for a Nebraska teacher was \$54,213 during the 2017-18 school year, the most recent year for which figures are available. That average pushed Nebraska from 30th to 25th in the national rankings of salaries by state, with Arkansas (43rd to 38th) the only other state that moved up as many as four spots. That also marks the loftiest ranking in memory, and perhaps ever, for Nebraska teachers. NEA has compiled the Rankings of the States for the past 74 years.

The latest standing reflects a long-term, concerted effort by local association negotiations teams in Nebraska, supported by NSEA, to remain competitive with their peers in the region. The diligence of those teams has paid off. As recently as the 2001-02 school year, Nebraska’s average salary ranked 46th in the country; as recently as 2007-08 Nebraska ranked 45th.

“Those who serve on contract negotiations teams have done an outstanding job over the past few years,” said Randy Gordon, NSEA’s director of collective bargaining. “Their work is performed largely behind the scenes but provides one of the greatest benefits of association membership. The results are reflected here.”

Even so, Nebraska teachers trail the national average by more than \$6,200.

### Rising Quickly Up the Charts

In 2001-02, the average salary for a Nebraska teacher was \$36,236. Salaries have slowly inched forward in Nebraska while other states have fallen by the wayside. In 2007-08, when Nebraska was 45th, that ranking trailed all contiguous states except South Dakota. Today, Nebraska trails only Wyoming, which has been ranked in the middle teens for the past 10 years, and Iowa, which has moved up 10 spots to 21st since 2007-08.

A year ago, Nebraska was No. 30, but in the most recent report flew past Maine, North Dakota, Texas, Virginia and Kentucky. North Dakota fell from 26th to 29th and Virginia fell from 28th to 32nd. The average salary in Virginia actually fell from \$52,340 to \$51,994, perhaps the result of retirement by large numbers of long-tenured employees.

South Dakota’s 47th place belies what has happened in that state in the past two years. A legislative initiative saw that state institute a half-cent sales tax increase in 2016, dedicated to enhancing teacher salaries. South Dakota moved from 51st three years ago to 48th, and to 47th this year. Three years ago, the average South Dakota teacher salary was just \$42,025.

### Student Numbers Up; State Aid Ranking Stagnant

The research provided by NEA also unveiled these facts:

- The number of public school students in Nebraska grew from 318,853 in the fall of 2016 to 323,273 in the fall of 2017 — an increase of 1.39 percent. That increase trailed only the District of Columbia (2.92 percent); Nevada (3.25 percent); and North Dakota (1.95 percent).

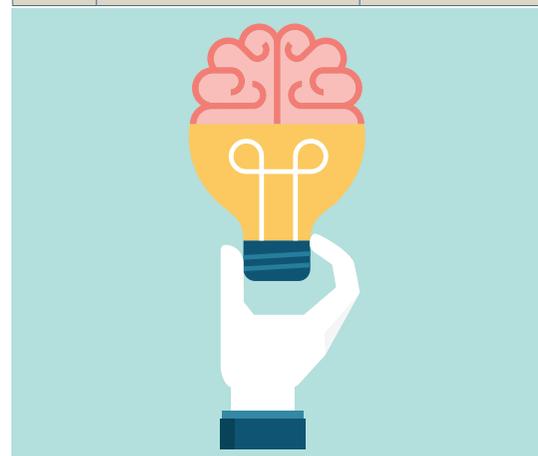
- Nebraska ranked 45th in the country in terms of state support of K-12 schools, with just 37.7 percent of funding provided by the state. Kansas (66 percent) was 7th; Wyoming (56.8 percent) was 16th; Iowa (55.6 percent) was 18th; Colorado (43.5 percent) was 31st; South Dakota (34.3 percent) was 48th; and Missouri (33.2 percent) was 49th.



**\$35,910\***  
**2019-20 NEBRASKA FIRST YEAR TEACHER AVERAGE STARTING SALARY**  
(\*NSEA DEPT. OF RESEARCH FIGURES)

### 2017-18 AVG. SALARY BY STATE:

U.S. AVERAGE		\$60,477
16	WYOMING	\$58,352
21	IOWA	\$57,018
25	NEBRASKA	\$54,213
31	COLORADO	\$52,701
41	KANSAS	\$49,754
43	MISSOURI	\$49,304
47	SO. DAKOTA	\$47,631



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- Instructional Technology
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# DHHS Taken to Task Over YRTC

## Kearney and Geneva Centers Short-Staffed, Underfunded, Under-Trained

NSEA Vice President Paul Schulte knows well the dangers of working at the state's Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers in Geneva and Kearney.

In 2008, Schulte's father was working security at the Kearney YRTC when he and another employee were assaulted by two 16-year-old clients, one swinging a sock with a pool ball inside. Schulte's father required stitches to his head, the other man suffered facial fractures. Both were treated at the hospital and released.

Schulte was also familiar with the YRTC's Kearney campus from his years as an undergrad at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. So, he was the ideal NSEA spokesman when the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee took testimony at Geneva and Kearney. The committee was reviewing staffing concerns, retention rates and alleged program deficiencies at the two YRTC units.

The state had taken extreme action in August, closing the Geneva site, citing staff shortages and deteriorating buildings. To effect the closure, nearly 30 girls were moved from the Geneva site to Kearney. That closure pushed a dozen teachers to a daily 90-minute one-way van ride to and from Geneva to Kearney. They continue to make the daily commute to work with the 20 girls who remain in Kearney, along with 90 or so boys.

### \$3 Million in Funding Eliminated

Meanwhile, there were more than two dozen vacancies on the Kearney YRTC security team in late September, according to one media account. It was against that backdrop that Schulte outlined concerns of staff and pointed out that the state had \$3 million budgeted two years ago for improvements at the YRTC sites. The money was not spent, and the budget line was later eliminated.

The state, the governor, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the committee, said Schulte, should move quickly to restore a positive culture and to restore staffing and funding.

"It was quite a shock to NSEA (to learn) that in the 17-18 fiscal year DHHS did not spend \$3 million dedicated to these facilities and then the governor cut that funding from his budget requests," he said. "These children, staff and this facility need the state's support in meeting these critical issues to create a positive learning and living environment."

NSEA represents nearly two dozen certificated teachers at those

units as part of the State Code Agency Teachers Association (SCATA). SCATA members also work at the Beatrice State Developmental Center and the Lincoln Regional Center.

### Hiring, Wages Lag

Over several weeks following the closure of the Geneva site, SCATA members met frequently with NSEA Organizational Specialist Rich Wergin and other Association officials. Those meetings produced these staff concerns, Schulte told state senators:

- There are serious security, space and education-hour issues at Kearney. The ability to remove acting-out youth from learning areas has been severely affected. There are also concerns that the girls housed there will be unable to meet the annual of 1,080 hours of required educational time.

- The DHHS is seriously behind in hiring faculty and non-education staff and is not paying wages adequate to recruit, train and retain quality, long-term employees.

- The DHHS schedule for hiring teachers is out-of-sync with the rest of the education family in Nebraska. "Our members believe DHHS' inability to effectively understand the educational recruiting timeline, process and retention of teaching staff is negatively affecting the education of the youth in our care, and the success of the YRTC Mission," said Schulte.

- A new YRTC youth treatment program is at risk due to inadequate staff training and lack of student living space. And, "On more than one occasion teachers have been left with

students who have become an imminent threat to themselves or others and there is little or often no security staff response," he said.

He said SCATA members and members of the Legislature's committee understand that many YRTC clients come from dysfunctional families. "This is our chance to help them acquire life skills, coping mechanisms and an education that will help them develop a plan for success," said Schulte.

Since the hearing, DHHS management has announced a plan to open a third YRTC site in Lincoln, with that site providing intensive mental health services to males and females. The DHHS plans call for up to six girls in the last stages of programming to be housed at Geneva, which has a capacity for more than 80 clients. Male and female offenders will continue to be housed in Kearney.

The YRTCs house teens ages 14 to 18 who have broken the law and have previously spent time in less-restrictive treatment sites.

NSEA will continue to monitor progress and work with SCATA members to ensure member voices are heard both at DHHS and in the Legislature.



**Message on YRTCs: NSEA Vice President Paul Schulte, Millard, testified before the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee at Kearney in October. Schulte had a moment to speak with committee chair and Omaha Sen. Sara Howard.**

## NSEA Supports Structure, Funding of ESUs in Interim Study

When the Legislature's Education Committee OK'd a study of the "structure, duties, current projects and financing" of the state's Educational Service Units, NSEA responded. The interim study was proposed by Omaha Sen. Lou Ann Linehan.

NSEA President Jenni Benson cited a recent contact with an NSEA member as an example of work performed by ESU staff.

"Just this week, one of NSEA's field representatives tried to schedule a meeting with

a speech pathologist at the ESU in Neligh," Benson wrote in a letter to the committee.

"Our field staffer encountered the usual issue: it's difficult to set a meeting with a moving target. The pathologist was scheduled at four schools over two days this week. Even though many ESU staff travel frequently in this manner, they remain committed to providing excellent service to Nebraska kids. Further, that four districts are able to share services of a speech pathologist through the ESU umbrella is a wonderful example of how the ESUs work."

Benson said "NSEA firmly supports continuance of the outstanding service offered by our 19 regional ESU's. Additional state aid should be allocated so that they may expand capacity, enhance the efficiency of local school districts, and improve learning opportunities for all Nebraska kids."

Testimony gathered during interim hearings can affect legislation in the future.

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# 'I've Never Thought About Not Belonging'

Alternative 'associations' offer cheap dues for a reason. They provide no real service.

There's no such thing as a bargain when it comes to protecting your career. Before risking your name and reputation, know the difference, know the facts.



**Janet Sheaffer has never** thought about *not* belonging to NSEA. So, when a vendor for the Association of American Educators reached out at a recent curriculum conference and said he had been a member of the NEA affiliate in another state, "but it was just too expensive," Sheaffer made it clear she was not interested.

"Their big sell was that it was cheaper," said Sheaffer. "But I've never thought about not being a member of NSEA — NSEA is my professional organization."

Sheaffer welcomes the multi-faceted benefits NSEA delivers. Those services range from bargaining support to professional and leadership development to member rights aid and member discounts. Educators won't get that combination of services elsewhere.

"I appreciate that the Association is doing all sorts of professional development," said Sheaffer. Further, she said, "Whenever our members are concerned about anything, or need information, NSEA has always been able to help."

Sheaffer has been with NSEA since she began teaching science for the Chase County Public Schools in Imperial 30 years ago. Before that, she belonged to NSEA's sister affiliate in Kansas.

"NSEA is about what is best for making teachers better teachers, and helping kids learn," she said. "It's not just about teachers; it's also about the kids."

**When Sheaffer encountered** the AAE vendor, she was also told "our association has the insurance, but we're not as expensive."

To quote an old proverb, "you get what you pay for."

With such alternative associations you don't get much for your money. For starters, you'll get no assistance when it comes to determining your salary, benefits, extra duty pay, or other issues related to bargaining. Nor will you get assistance in negotiating working conditions. Educators know that working conditions are the same conditions in which students learn.

In fact, AAE members will get no bargaining assistance at all. The website states clearly that "AAE does not engage in collective bargaining. We believe that collective bargaining focuses on what's best for adults, not necessarily students."

**The reality is that collective bargaining is good** for students. For instance, as a result of bargained agreements, some Nebraska school districts have a class size appeal process. If a teacher is assigned 39 students in a biology lab, the teacher can appeal to have the class size reduced, or have additional teaching help acquired.

In another example, NSEA provides sample contract language regarding classroom safety. The language obligates the school district to provide a safe working environment and has been adopted in many locals. Some local associations negotiate agreements in districts with dual credit class offerings, with the contract designating a share of income from higher education institutions for those classes to student scholarships.

Bargaining improved salaries gives teachers financial peace of

**She Always Belongs:** Chase County Education Association member Janet Sheaffer, right, takes pride in NSEA membership, and has never thought about not belonging. At left is NSEA Teaching and Learning Specialist Cindy Copich.

## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES NSEA PROVIDES THAT OTHER ORGANIZATIONS DO NOT OFFER

Nebraska-Based, Trained Field Staff .....	Not Provided
Professional Development .....	Not Provided
Bargaining Support .....	Not Provided
Children's Fund for Kids in Need .....	Not Provided
Support of State Retirement Plan .....	Not Provided
Leadership Development .....	Not Provided
Support for Pro-Public School Legislation .....	Not Provided
Evaluation Support .....	Not Provided
Assistance with Reprimands .....	Not Provided
Answers to Contract Questions .....	Not Provided
Assistance with Medical Leave .....	Not Provided
Help with Extra Duty Assignments .....	Not Provided
Conflict Resolution .....	Not Provided
Mentoring for Coaches, Teachers .....	Not Provided
EHA Health Insurance .....	Not Provided
Led by Elected Members .....	Not Provided
Due Process Support .....	Not Provided
Legal Services, if Needed .....	Not Provided

mind and necessitates fewer hours at those second (and third) jobs. Financial security also affects job performance. See page 12 for the effect of NSEA bargaining assistance on educator salaries.

**Sheaffer said many think NSEA** membership is "for when you are in trouble." While there is no more important measure than protecting your most important financial asset — your job — membership is about much more than liability insurance.

NSEA will assist when members are crosswise with an administrator. NSEA's 18 organizational specialists — one assigned to every school district in Nebraska — know your local leadership team, your administrators and your contract. They answer questions you and your colleagues may have about evaluations, teaching certificates, Department of Education rules and so much more.

No other group offers on-the-ground staff with that knowledge and those connections — benefits working in your favor each day.

So when approached by someone selling cheap, second-rate association membership, know the facts and put your cash on quality.

"The more involved I become, the more I get out of it," said Sheaffer. "I can't imagine not being a member."

# Members May Self-Nominate for 2020 Leadership Institute

One of the great benefits of Association membership is NSEA's Leadership Institute, a once-a-year, one-of-a-kind opportunity for educators.

The four-day program allows select members to learn about their leadership style, hone leadership skills, utilize the NSEA organizational specialist assigned to the member's school, understand communications strategies, and to understand and access the resources, services and programs offered by the NSEA.

For the first time, NSEA members may self-nominate for consideration as a Leadership Institute participant. There will be a limit of 30 participants in the 2020 class.

The 33rd edition of Leadership Institute is scheduled for July 13-16, 2020. It will be held in conjunction with NSEA University at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Innovation Campus. If you seek professional development along with a leadership angle, NSEA's Leadership Institute is the best option in Nebraska. Training will touch on member rights, organizing, membership and other topics.

"Leadership Institute is always an exciting three days," said NSEA Organizational Specialist Marlene Wehrbein. "Combining it with NSEA University and all the possibilities that program holds will make the Institute even more memorable."

The expectation is that each participant will take part in the entire Institute, including group meals each evening. The cost of rooms, meals and parking are covered.

Being nominated does not guarantee selection, said Wehrbein.

"When selecting participants, the committee attempts to gather a class that is diverse in age, location across the state, size of school district, ethnicity and other factors," she said.

Any K-12, Higher Education or Educational Support Professional member who is interested in growing their leadership skills may attend. Those interested should call NSEA associate staff member Jan Anderson at 1-800-742-0047, or e-mail:

[jan.anderson@nsea.org](mailto:jan.anderson@nsea.org)

Interested members may also self-nominate at:

[www.nsea.org/2020LINominate](http://www.nsea.org/2020LINominate)

## 28 NSEA Members Earn 2019 Leadership Diplomas

These 28 members earned their Leadership diplomas from the 2019 NSEA Leadership Institute:

### Axtell

Jennifer Marsh  
Shannon Sis

### Elkhorn

Jake Barry

### Exeter-Milligan

Kara Myers

### Franklin

Becky Cleveland  
Kelsey Hanshaw

### Fremont

Katherine Lederer

### Grand Island

Elena Garcia

### Humboldt-Table Rock-

### Steinauer

Brad Catlin

### Logan View

Denton Beacom

### Lincoln

Gina Boltz  
Megan Simsic

### Northeast

Comm. College  
Matthew McCarthy

### Omaha

Julie Bullard  
Molly Davies  
Tatiana Eskridge  
Tonja Frank  
Josh McDougall  
Latosha Washington

### Papillion-LaVista

Jordan Koch

### Raymond Central

Carolyn  
Enevoldsen

### Superior

Taylor  
Ruzicka-Scheele

### Sutton

Robin Griess  
Michelle Kreutzer

### Westside

Travis Vo

### West Point

Teresa Person

### Wilcox-Hildreth

Jennifer Kotschwar

### Yutan

Matthew Gunter

# Horace Mann Offers Donations to DonorsChoose

## Drawing will Select Projects to be Funded

Most educators spend too much of their own hard-earned money on classroom projects and supplies – an average of more than \$500 a year according to the 2016 Scholastic Teacher and Principal Report.

That's where Horace Mann's \$10,000 DonorsChoose.org Fall into Funding giveaway comes in! Through Dec. 13, Horace Mann will draw winners and donate directly to the recipient teacher's established DonorsChoose.org project.

DonorsChoose.org is a not-for-profit organization that connects teachers in need of classroom resources with donors who want to help.

Horace Mann is proud to be a national sponsor of DonorsChoose.org. Since 2011, the company has donated more than \$4.4 million, funding more than 45,000 projects and affecting 1.6 million students.

Post your project on DonorsChoose.org. Then, to enter as often as you like for a chance to win one of the Horace Mann drawings go to:

[horacemann.com/fall-into-funding](http://horacemann.com/fall-into-funding)

Need help creating a project? Go to DonorsChoose.org to pick out what you need from the online store. Explain why and how the resources you're requesting will affect your students, and then submit your project. It's that easy!

Contact your local Horace Mann representative at:

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

# Nebraska History Museum Seeks Retired Teachers as Volunteers

The Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln is looking to grow the museum's group of education volunteers, called Curiosity Guides, and would love to learn from and work with retired teachers.

Curiosity Guides are the education volunteers at the Nebraska History Museum. Depending on interests, Guides can help with one or multiple informal education programs the museum offers such as tours for school groups, open-house styled events for families or summer workshops for childcare groups.

On tours, Guides use historic "eyes-only" artifacts, hands-on objects, real Nebraska stories and an essential question to spark imagination and curiosity in children. At open-house styled events and summer workshops Guides assist visitors to bring Nebraska history into their lives and their lives into Nebraska history — like making up a suffrage slogan and crafting a banner to share it, making "mock

whipping cream" to get a taste of wartime rationing, or making adobe bricks of soil, straw and water to get a feel for early housing materials, just to name a few past activities.

The education program at the museum has a varied schedule of tours and events lined up year round. Guides can pick and choose what to help with based on interests and schedule.

Guides will also experience some unique "behind the scenes" activities as museum staff prepare for new exhibits and programs at the Nebraska History Museum.

Guides will be in contact with primary sources, exhibit curators, teachers and kids from across Nebraska annually.

Training sessions will be held in November and again in February 2020. For more details contact Jessica Stoner at 402-471-4757, or at:

[jessica.stoner@nebraska.gov](mailto:jessica.stoner@nebraska.gov)

# Social Emotional Learning is November Webinar Topic

## Monthly Seminar Series Designed to Enhance Teaching Skills

Professional development through NSEA's series of webinars seems to be valuable to those who have participated.

This evaluation came from a participant in October's session, which looked at building positive classroom environments: "I felt challenged to think multi-dimensionally about my personal teaching philosophy. Why am I doing the routines and procedures in my class the way I am?"



**Juravich**

Those teachers who seek such professional development can check in with NSEA's new once-a-month webinars from the comfort of their own home or school office. A teaching professional will guide discussion on classroom topics at 6:30 p.m. CT on the second Thursday of each month.

The Nov. 7 edition will feature 2018 Ohio Teacher of the Year Jonathan Juravich and a review of Creative Strategies for Social Emotional Learning. The session will discuss strategies to embed social emotional learning into any grade, any

content and any class in order to unlock every student's learning potential.

Juravich is an elementary art educator at Powell, OH, and is the Building Environment Team leader at his school, overseeing school culture, partnerships and service learning. As the district Elementary Visual Art Department chair, he also facilitates professional development, advances curriculum and advocates for arts education best practices. Juravich will be assisted by another member of the National Network of Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY). NNSTOY is assisting NSEA with the series.

These professional development offerings are a component of NSEA's strategic plan to provide professional growth in the profession. Utilizing the Zoom platforms allows NSEA



**Webinar Chat:** Kearney Education Association members Raneë Borowski, left, and Kayla Paul chat before the viewing of NSEA's October webinar on positive learning environments.

to reach teachers across the state, wherever they are most comfortable learning. Members can register at this link:

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

This month's session will be followed a week later, on Thursday, Nov. 21, with a group coaching session and extension of learning. That gives time for participants to "test drive" any strategies learned in the earlier session. The group coaching session will also allow participants to ask questions, fine tune their delivery and share their successes with colleagues.

October's session, Building a Positive Classroom Environment, had a large crowd, including nearly two dozen members from a number of school districts, watching together at a restaurant in Kearney.

"We are pleased to be offering this programming. It is just another way NSEA is serving the immediate needs of our educator members," said NSEA President Jenni Benson.

The December 12 topic will be Working with Disruptive Students. Other coming topics include:

- Social-Emotional Learning
- Preventing Burnout
- De-escalation Strategies
- Trauma-informed Classrooms
- Restorative Practices

For more details, call or email NSEA Teaching and Learning Specialist Dr. Cindy Copich at 1-800-742-0047, or: [cindy.copich@nsea.org](mailto:cindy.copich@nsea.org)



## WEBINAR SERIES

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

## NSEA will Co-Host Child Health, Education Summit

"Health Minds = Promising Futures" will be the theme as the NSEA joins the Nebraska Association of School Boards to co-host the 10th Nebraska Child Health & Education Summit in Lincoln on Tuesday, Dec. 3.

The morning-long summit is organized each year by the Nebraska Child Health and Education Alliance, a coalition of organizations interested in furthering the well-being of Nebraska children.

Dr. David F. Soglin, chief medical officer at La Rabida Children's Hospital in Chicago, will serve as keynote for the

conference and Audrey Soglin, executive director of the Illinois Education Association, will keynote the conference.

Other topics scheduled throughout the day include:

■ Best Practices for Schools Forming Partnerships with Health Care. This panel discussion will include Blair Superintendent Randy Gilson, Ralston Superintendent Dr. Mark Adler, and retired Gretna Superintendent Kevin Riley.

■ Senatorial Panel Response to Audience Priorities. A panel of Nebraska state senators will address the audience and answer questions.

Other organizations that are supporting the event are the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, the Nebraska School Counselor Association, the Nebraska Medical Association, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, Boystown National Research Hospital and Voices for Children.

The summit will be held at Innovation Campus in Lincoln, with opening remarks by NSEA President Jenni Benson at 8 a.m. and the keynote at 8:15. There is no cost to attend. For more details, go to:

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

# Nicolai Led NSEA Accounting for 20 Years

## Former Business Teacher had Many Skills, Interests

Glennis Nicolai, who served as receptionist and associate staff member and eventually became head of NSEA's accounting operations for more than 20 years, died in Lincoln on Oct. 21, 2019. She was 90.



**Nicolai**

Born in Kansas and raised near Tekamah, NE, she graduated Cum Laude from Dana College and taught

business, including typing, shorthand and bookkeeping, for the Gothenburg Public Schools. It was there she met husband Art. They moved to Lincoln when their children began school.

Nicolai joined NSEA in July 1965, and worked as receptionist, associate staffer and on other projects and duties for more than four years. In December 1969, she became the association's assistant treasurer (the Association's papers of incorporation list the executive director as the treasurer).

She also managed the books for the NSEA political action committee and for two NSEA affiliates, the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) and NSEA-Retired. She retired from NSEA at the end of October 1994.

Nicolai was a member of a number of organizations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution, Eastern Star, American Historical Society of Germans from Russia and Christ United Methodist Church, among others. She enjoyed traveling, gardening, knitting, Husker football and ballroom dancing.

Nicolai was preceded in death by her husband in 2015 and by two brothers and a sister. She is survived by daughter Nancy, by son Jim and by two grandsons.

Memorials may be sent to the Food Bank of Lincoln Backpack Program or the Women's Wesleyan Educational Council.

## Your Colleagues Deserve to be Recognized

Now is a good time to begin discussing who you or your association would like to nominate for one of the honors to be given at NSEA's 159th Delegate Assembly in April. In addition to awards presentations, elected delegates will conduct association business, and elect a president, vice president and NEA director. Up to 30 sessions of professional development will be offered to delegates and the general Association membership.

For the awards, any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, ESP or deserving group. Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 14, 2020, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online, with required supporting material mailed to the NSEA. Online nomination forms are found under the 'Call for Nominations' link at:

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

The 2020 Delegate Assembly will be held at Lincoln's Marriott Cornhusker Hotel on Friday evening and Saturday, April 24-25. NSEA members are eligible for:

■ **Rookie of the Year:** Honors a first-year teacher who excelled in the 2018-19 school year.

■ **Award for Teaching Excellence:** Honors a teacher who has excelled over 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 revealed at Delegate Assembly. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award. NSEA members are also eligible for:

■ **The Great Plains Milestone Award:** Honors an individual/group for promoting human and civil rights.

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

■ **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding communication within the association.

Also to be presented:

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

■ **Media:** Recognizes a newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues and promotion of public education.

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## Thanksgiving Duties are Ahead; NEAMB Can Help!

Thanksgiving is near, and the break will be welcomed.

You've made it through the first quarter but are now being bombarded by preparations for the upcoming Holidays — shopping for gifts, for dinner, and for all the guests coming to stay. Your hands would be full even without having to worry about classroom demands and cold and flu season — if only you had more time!

We can help you at NEAMB.com with resources for shopping and discounts, ideas for entertaining and hassle-free holidays. We can even help with upcoming student loan payments!

■ Protecting your family is important. We have a new section of our website dedicated to help you learn how to protect the Moments that Matter, along with Five Money Mistakes to Avoid. Also, don't forget to make sure your life insurance beneficiary information is up-to-date at:

[www.neamb.com/protect](http://www.neamb.com/protect)

■ The Holidays mean shopping — shopping for gifts, for meals when entertaining, for travel — and we can help you! Discover smart online shopping tips, ways to wrap up your gift list quickly and in-budget, as well as how to manage the guilt and stress of surviving the holidays at:

[neamb.com/everydaysavings](http://neamb.com/everydaysavings)

■ Winter Break is near. We have tips and deals for getting away to relax and spend time with family and friends. Whether you hope to get in the holiday spirit by checking out the top U.S. holiday markets or you are unsure of your rights when holiday travels do go wrong, we have everything you need to make sure you enjoy a hassle-free holiday. Learn more at

[neamb.com/travel](http://neamb.com/travel)

■ Did you graduate last Spring? Are you worried about student loan payments kicking in? We can help you learn how to lower your monthly payments and even qualify for student loan forgiveness — just go to:

[neamb.com/studentloans](http://neamb.com/studentloans)

# You'll Learn More About These 5 Things Soon

## Emerging Trends Will Gain Steam in 2020

By Mary Ellen Flannery

Here are five emerging education trends that are likely to pick up momentum in the coming year.

### Trauma-Informed Education

Educators heard a lot about trauma-informed or trauma-sensitive education in 2018. You'll hear more in 2019-20. At the NEA Representative Assembly (RA) in July, delegates committed NEA to continue educating members about the negative effects of traumatic experiences on students' ability to learn and to share strategies to help. It is a growing feature of union- or district-led professional development, including NSEA.

Every Franklin, Indiana, classroom has a "calming corner" where stressed students can meet emotional needs. "We're moving to trauma-informed education," Franklin school counselor Angie Clendenning said. "The calming corner helps students self-regulate without leaving the classroom."

### Educators Prep for 2020

When educators in West Virginia circled the state capitol in March holding signs and wearing red shirts, it felt like déjà vu. Didn't they do the same in 2018? Meanwhile, strikes in Denver, Los Angeles, Oakland and elsewhere showed more educators joining the #RedforEd movement, fighting for fair pay and funding. The coming year promises more such action, especially as support for #RedforEd goals grows among parents and community.

A recent PDK Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools shows 74 percent of parents and 71 percent of all adults would support a strike by teachers for higher pay; 84 percent of parents would support a strike for more school funding (Nebraska is a no-strike state).

NEA members live in every state and every ZIP code. Last year, they harnessed that power and took it to the voting booth, helping elect pro-public education candidates at every level. In 2020, they will be poised again to make a difference. The future of public education is a top issue.

"Educators are ready to make their presence felt in this election. We will play a vital role in choosing who becomes the next president," said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. Read more about why educators must vote in 2020 at:

[www.bit.ly/educatorprep20/](http://www.bit.ly/educatorprep20/)

### Virtual Reality in the Classroom

While we've been hearing about virtual reality (VR) since the days of The Matrix, it hasn't caught

fire yet. While 70 percent of 8- to 15-year-olds say they're interested in VR, only 21 percent of U.S. homes have a VR headset, according to Common Sense research. Still, that level of student interest has led some educators to Google Cardboard for simple, low-cost VR headsets, or to CoSpaces.io. With those tools, students can "time travel" to different historical periods, experience different possible careers, or travel to places all over the world without leaving the classroom.

"When you're working with middle school students, and they say they don't want to leave your class, you know you have something magical!" says Chicago-area librarian Andrea Trudeau.

### Self-Care for Educators

As educators are becoming more aware of the effect of trauma on students, we're noting the effects of stress and secondary trauma on educators.

Introducing a new business item at NEA's RA in July, Texas State Teachers Association President Noel Candelaria likened the need for teacher "self-care" to the recommended practice for airline passengers to "secure their own oxygen mask before helping others."

It's not just for the benefit of educators — it's also to benefit their students. In many cases, local and state unions lead the way.

### Charter School Scrutiny

Long ago, hailed as a panacea for public education, charter schools were popular. Evidence that the mood has shifted emerged this summer. New York legislators refused in June to lift a cap on new charters, halting charter school growth in New York City indefinitely.

From shoddy financial management, lack of accountability, a mixed (at best) academic record, and exclusionary enrollment practices, the charter sector's record has come under heightened scrutiny.

An NEA "report card" issued in May found that nearly every state in the country is failing to require adequate oversight over charter schools, and educators scored some key victories against for-profit charter schools in 2019, particularly in California.

"Handing over students' education to privately managed, unaccountable charters jeopardizes student success, undermines public education and harms communities," said Eskelsen García.

Find the NEA report on charters here:

[www.bit.ly/neacharterreport](http://www.bit.ly/neacharterreport)



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Staysha Adams

First grade teacher, Buffalo Elementary School in North Platte, Nebraska, and Assistant Speech Coach at North Platte High School

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

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- ◆ Special Education (K-12)
- ◆ Special Education – Early Childhood Special Education (Birth-Kindergarten)

*\*Not all required courses available online. For complete course listing, visit [csc.edu/graduate/degree.csc](http://csc.edu/graduate/degree.csc)*



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# Teachers are Hurting



**Executive Dir.  
Maddie Fennell**

“

*Teaching  
isn't easy, but it  
shouldn't be  
life-threatening.*

”

I can't write this column without crying. I'm writing on a Monday afternoon, following our monthly NSEA staff meeting. I opened that meeting with something that has been weighing on my mind. Afterwards, Al Koontz, our assistant director of communications and editor of *The Voice*, sat down next to me and said, "what you just said needs to be your next column." He was right. Someone – no, everyone – needs to hear this.

Our teachers are hurting. Not just a few teachers, and not just a little.

I spoke recently with a special education teacher who has been choked until the world went black and her throat was damaged, not once but twice in one week. All by a first-grade student. She missed more than a week of school because of her injury. The student is still in her classroom, and after three weeks the promised IEP meeting has yet to take place. The additional help promised by the school district has been sporadic.

Another teacher, injured on the job by a student, was afraid to share other, ongoing health issues, fearing the district would deny a workman's compensation claim. Last week the teacher had emergency surgery which uncovered multiple brain tumors. As of this writing this teacher remains hospitalized in critical condition.

I was on vacation last month when NSEA President Jenni Benson called, sobbing. Nebraska's education family had lost a young, first-year teacher to suicide. He was from a family of teachers, a student member of our association, a young man full of promise and passion, poised to make a world of difference.

Jenni was not only upset by his death, but by a conversation she had soon afterwards with another young educator. As they spoke, Jenni mentioned the first-year teacher's passing. The young woman she was talking to said, "Do you know how many times I thought of doing that last year? Do you know how hard it is to have no food in your fridge a whole week before payday?"

### Struggling to Survive

I could fill this column with stories of teachers who are hurting. They are our colleagues who came into this profession because they loved kids, because they wanted to make a difference, because they wanted to share their love for a subject they were passionate about. Instead, many are struggling, some even struggling just to survive.

I have often laughingly told new teachers that the best thing about your first year of teaching is that you

do it just once. I share my story because I was a first-year, first-grade teacher with 28 kids who were BD, LD – every letter of the alphabet – and a retiring principal. I tell how I mistook the severe weather drill bell for the fire drill bell and had the only kids in the building lined up outside instead of assuming the tornado position in the boys' restroom (That might have been subliminal – after all, who wants to take shelter in a boys' bathroom?).

But I don't talk nearly enough about my second year.

I always told myself "Just make it through the first year and you will be OK!" so I wasn't emotionally prepared for my second year. Teaching remained incredibly difficult. It was a new set of kids with a new set of problems and I didn't have enough resources or time to meet all their needs.

I became anxious. Then I became depressed. With the encouragement of friends and family, I called the Employee Assistance

Program and began counseling. They gave me tools, and medication for a short time, to help me deal with stress. I've gone back into counseling periodically and learned new skills to deal with new stresses.

### Teaching Ebbs and Flows

Not only do teachers have their own personal trauma at times, but we are also often dealing with the secondary trauma or compassion fatigue we experience working with traumatized students.

When I was in high school my parish priest, Father Hoelck, said something that has stuck with me for almost 40 years: "Impression without expression invites depression."

This profession has great rewards, but also great pressures and tremendous stressors. Teaching can ebb and flow like a tide or it can overwhelm you like a tsunami.

So, please reach out for help if you begin to feel overwhelmed, if you sense a tsunami headed your way. Talk to a friend or family member. Tell a colleague or your doctor (the EHA/Blue Cross health plan does provide some coverage for counseling). Call your Employee Assistance Program or a Suicide Hotline. Call the NSEA and ask for your Organizational Specialist or call and ask for me.

Whatever the case, please, please, please, put yourself first and reach out for help when you feel overwhelmed.

Teaching isn't easy, but it shouldn't be life threatening.

## Mental Health Resources

**National Suicide Hotline:**  
1-800-273-8255

**Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
suicidepreventionlifeline.org

**Nebraska Suicide & Crisis Hotlines**  
suicidehotlines.com/nebraska.html

**About Affordable Counseling**  
www.moneyunder30.com/affordable-therapy

**Stress Relief Techniques**  
helpguide.org/articles/stress/quick-stress-relief

# The Lessons Continue with NSEA-Retired

## Knowledge Shared with SEAN at Hastings

Your NSEA-Retired Association has a long history of assisting teachers-to-be improve their skills, and that work continues. When the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) held a fall conference at Hastings College on Oct. 4-5, NSEA-Retired was there.

One of the three conference presentations was provided by NSEA-Retired President Dr. De Tonack. Her workshop focused on classroom management procedures. The ASCD material titled “Managing Your Classroom with Restorative Practices” was provided to all participants, funded through NSEA-Retired grant monies. SEAN members added many of their thoughts and suggestions as well.

NSEA-Retired would look forward to providing similar sessions and materials to interested active and student members in the future. Contact Tonack via the email link at the bottom of this page for details.

### LEA-Retired Attracts Star Power

Sports broadcaster Kevin Kugler was featured at the Lincoln Education Association Retired’s September Scholarship Brunch.



**Kugler**

Kugler graduated from Lincoln High and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. His broadcasting career reaches from local sporting events to the Olympics while working for the Big Ten Network, Fox Sports, NET/Big Red Wrap Up and Westwood One.

Kugler is currently employed by Westwood One, calling Sunday night NFL football. He is also Westwood One’s lead announcer for college basketball, and has called the Final Four as well as the Big Ten Network games. Due to travel commitments, he recently retired from NET/Big Red Wrap Up after a 20-year stint.

Kugler is the son of LEA Retired member Viki Kugler and son-in-law of LEA Retired member and program co-chair Joe Shandera.

### Retired Members Chance to Win \$50

NSEA-Retired has current emails from about half of all retired members, but the Association would benefit by having updated emails from all members. To encourage this, leadership will draw from the entire list of NSEA-Retired emails on December 1, with the drawn member receiving \$50.

If you have not been receiving emails from NSEA’s Rebecca Smith please send an email to her before December 1 with a subject line of “Retired email.” Send the email to her at:

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

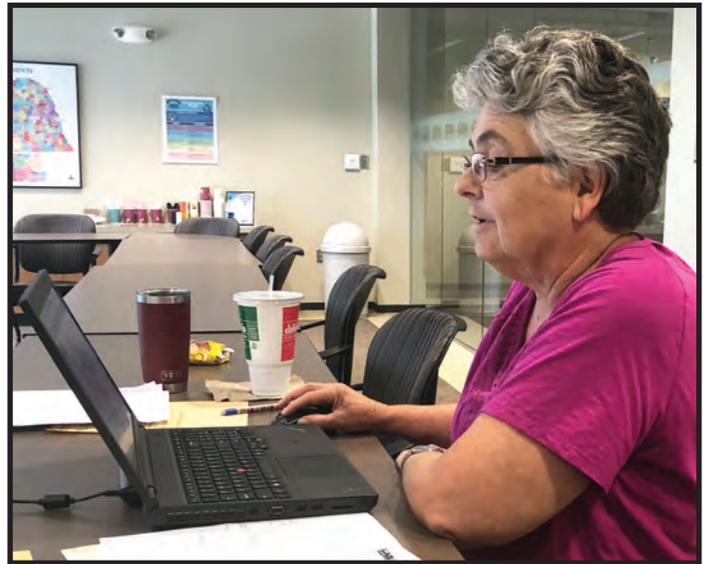
### NSEA Elections Ahead

Elections for NSEA-Retired officers will occur early next year, with a deadline for filing for office in early February.

Those positions that will be open include president and vice



**Strategy Review:** Members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska review classroom management strategies in a session by NSEA President Dr. De Tonack. The session took place at the SEAN Fall Conference at Hastings College.



**Supporting the Cause:** When NSEA needed help with data entry regarding new and potential members, NSEA-Retired members stepped to the forefront. Here, Margaret Rasmussen of Lincoln spends one of her many hours keying data into an NSEA database. Other Lincoln-area NSEA-Retired members who assisted were Kim Clabaugh, Jane Nyffleler, Arlene Rea, Pat Etherton and De Tonack.

president. Also open are board seats from Capitol, Elkhorn and Sandhills districts. All are three-year terms.

### Caption Incorrect

A photo in last month’s edition showing participants in a retirement seminar hosted by NSEA-Retired incorrectly identified those depicted. Mike Max was seated at front, and those standing were Reita Snyder, Barb Freouf and Nancy Swett. Not pictured was Nancy Jeffers. Our apologies.

— De Tonack,  
NSEA-Retired President  
[dtonack@neb.rr.com](mailto:dtonack@neb.rr.com)

# Time is Now to Apply for Belz, Lynch Krause

## Stipend Dollars Honor Former Leaders, Given for Staff, Association Improvement

Good teachers are always looking to improve their skill set. NSEA makes learning easier with an award from the Belz/Lynch/Krause Educational Grant Fund. The 2020 application deadline for those funds is Saturday, Feb. 22.

Grants are awarded for projects related to improving a local association; development of instructional materials; or for staff development for individuals of a local association. Eligible are any NSEA member; group of NSEA members; or any NSEA local association.

The application must include an abstract of the project, not to exceed four typed pages, including the following information: need; how the project will address the need to relate to professional growth goals; project description; timeline; a budget statement; and method of evaluating project success. Applications must be submitted online by Saturday, Feb. 22. Recipients will be notified in March.

A letter describing and evaluating the project shall be submitted to NSEA's Scholarship and Grants Committee within three months of project completion.



Belz



Lynch



Krause

The grants are named for John Lynch, NSEA's executive director from 1959 to 1974; Paul Belz, executive director from 1974-84; and Helen Krause, NSEA president in 1966 and the first Nebraskan to serve on NEA's Executive Committee.

For details, or for an application form, visit the NSEA website and look for the link on the home page. The form will be posted through Saturday, Feb. 22. The website is at:

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

Get details from Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047 or via email at:

[sally.bodtke@nsea.org](mailto:sally.bodtke@nsea.org)

# Helt, Koch Earn Appointments to NCTE

## In New Role, Will Advise State Board of Education

The State Board of Education has appointed two active NSEA members to the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education (NCTE).

Michelle Helt, a member of the South Sioux City Education Association, and Jordan Koch, a member of the Papillion-LaVista Education Association, will serve terms through 2023. They are two of the three state board-appointed members of NCTE. The other is Dr. Edward Truemper, an Omaha pediatrician.

All told, 21 NSEA members, including six alternates, serve the council.

Helt is a third grade teacher at South Sioux City's Cardinal Elementary School and was the 2018 Nebraska Teacher of the Year. She is a founding member of the school district's Curriculum Council and has mentored practicum students in all areas since 2003.

Koch teaches sixth grade at Bell Elementary and serves on the PLEA Board of Directors and the NSEA Metro District Board of Directors. She has testified before legislative committees, notably on teacher mentoring issues. She is an active member of the NSEA-sponsored New Generation of Educators in Nebraska (NGEN). Koch will serve on NCTE as a state board-appointed teacher alternate.

NCTE is an advisory body to the State Board. Its membership represents statewide organizations which have a direct involvement or interest in teacher and



Helt



Koch

administrative preparation, as well as higher education institutions in Nebraska which are approved by the State Board to prepare and recommend for certification teachers, administrators, and counselors; and those people recommended for special services endorsements. The State Board reserves sole authority over college program approval, certification and teaching endorsements. As an advisory body, NCTE develops and recommends education standards for State Board approval.

NSEA-appointed members of NCTE are Diana Casey, Omaha; Sarah Brown, Wilber-Clatonia; Travis Coe, Crete; Marsha Edquist, Millard; Devin Garcia, Diller-Odell; Rachel Hanson, Wallace; Susan Loney, Omaha; Pat Ludeke, Fremont; Donna Moss, Hastings; Caroline Rice, Plattsmouth; Mary Schlieder, Norris; Susan Stake, Waverly; Michelle Tebbe, Grand Island; and alternates Doreen Jankovich, Omaha; Fran Marymee, Lincoln; Linda Mihm, Kimball; Rachel Palmer, Winnebago; Susan Ptacek, Lincoln; and Patty Wenninghoff, Bellevue.

NCTE also includes 10 representatives and six alternates for the Nebraska Council of School Administrators; two representatives and one alternate from the Nebraska Association of School Boards; one

representative and an alternate from each of 15 four-year colleges and universities in Nebraska; a representative and an alternate from the Nebraska Community College Association; and a representative and alternate from the Nebraska Council on American Private Education.

## Blaine Morrow

Blaine Morrow, a teacher at The Academies of Grand Island Senior High and an NSEA member, died in Grand Island on Monday, Oct. 7. He was 23.

Morrow was a graduate of Hastings College where he started on the football team and was a student scholar, always working hard to learn. He had a passion for helping young people and each year volunteered at Royal Family Camps. He loved the outdoors, time on the farm, fishing, hunting, hiking, chess and board games.

Morrow is survived by his parents, Greg and Tracy Morrow, two brothers and a fiance. Memorials to the Grand Island Public Schools Foundation.

# The Mind Inside, Episode Two, Now Available

## NE Loves Public Schools Studies Mental Health

In the second episode of the Nebraska Loves Public Schools docuseries, *The Mind Inside*, audiences will learn about the complicated world of social media, its influence on young minds and its affect on student mental health and the classroom environment.

The second episode debuted in mid-October and is now available online. Episode one premiered in January and is also available online.

The series looks at mental health in public schools, the challenges students face, the social, emotional, and behavioral resources available for students who struggle, and the short- and long-term solutions communities provide.

Both episodes were filmed and produced by Nebraska Loves Public Schools, an organization dedicated to supporting public education through filmmaking. Nebraska Loves Public Schools received NSEA's highest honor, the Friend of Education Award, in 2015.

The goal of the series is to create awareness around mental health and to encourage understanding, empathy and support for students, said Executive Director Sally Nellson Barrett.

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

## Getting in the Spirit of Thanksgiving

From Vallye Blanton, a fifth-grade teacher in Georgia:

"I give my students a list of people or objects (the President, a professional football player, Snoopy, Harriet Tubman, a Martian, a pizza pan, etc.) and ask them to write a paragraph, sentence, or a few words describing what the person or object has to be thankful for. This often leads to good discussions and has resulted in some excellent pieces of writing from my students."



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

"The Mind Inside series explores one of the most pressing and complicated issues in public education today, mental health," she said.

Nellson Barrett said the series was created to explore what students are struggling with today, what social, emotional, and behavioral resources are available, and what schools and their communities

are developing as short- and long-term solutions. For details, go to: <https://iloveps.org>

## Speaking of Education

"You can't direct the wind but you can adjust the sails."

— Anonymous



**Working Forward:** Members of NSEA's Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee met in Lincoln recently to plan for the coming year. Among the work completed, members created subcommittees to address specific issues; discussed guidelines for forming local association EMAC committees; and discussed a New Business Item for NSEA's Delegate Assembly regarding the Praxis Core Competency Test required of college of education applicants at all Nebraska colleges and universities.

**Front row, from left, are:** NSEA Organizational Specialist Isau Metes; Nebraska NEA Director Tracy Hartman Bradley, Omaha; EMAC Vice Chair Nora Lenz, Lincoln; Paula Aguirre, Bellevue; Elena Garcia, Grand Island; Halley Taylor, Omaha; NSEA-Retired President Dr. De Tonack; NSEA President Jenni Benson; and NSEA Organizational Specialist Carol Hicks.

**Second row, from left, are:** Liz Carranza-Rodriguez and Julie Colby, Lincoln; Gabriel Gutierrez, University of Nebraska at Omaha; EMAC Chair Eddie Ventura, Omaha; Nebraska NEA Director Linda Freye, Lincoln; Travis Vo, Westside; Malique Trumbo, York College; and Teresa Matthews, Westside.