

# THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ February 2012



## My SUPPORTING COMMUNITY

Beatrice Teacher Mindy Summers Spends Her Salary Dollars with Local Merchants. State Aid Cuts Would Reduce the Number of Teachers Spending on Main Street.

## Upcoming Assignments

Feb. 10-11

### Intergenerational Mentoring Program

■ **What:** The eighth round in the NSEA-Retired affiliate's nationally-known program kicks off at NSEA Headquarters in February.

■ **Details:** Retired members pair with and mentor college and university students who are studying to enter the profession. Call NSEA's Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047 for details.

Feb. 10-11

### NSEA Higher Ed Academy Advocacy Conference

■ **What:** Bargaining representatives from NSEA higher education locals will meet to network, learn and organize. Registration is now open for the conference, which will be held in Kearney

■ **Details:** Call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047, or turn to Page 24 for more details.

Feb. 19

### Filing Deadline for NSEA Offices

■ **What:** Nearly three dozen seats on NSEA district boards are open, as are six seats on the NSEA Board of Directors.

■ **Details:** How to file, when voting takes place are on Page 15.

# Freedom to Teach: Voice Your Concerns

The profession of education faces unprecedented challenges, and nobody knows more about those challenges than teachers in the field.

Meanwhile, in the classroom, many teachers worry about or actually fear losing their jobs – to the extent they tread very carefully in their actions, behavior, or course content. Personal examples include:

“I taught social studies and encouraged free speech. At the same time I made sure both sides of an issue were presented. Still, I had a parent complain to the principal because I presented information about a political party.”

“I had a school board member who consistently voted against my contract renewal because I taught classes on Communism and the Soviet Union.”

Some have reported they've had “an attorney demand to the principal that I be fired because we discussed a local issue involving a topic he didn't like.”

And finally, one teacher had two members of the school board refuse to permit him to continue service on the NEA Board of Directors because they didn't like the NEA.

Thus, many K-12 teachers will not join organizations such as AFCON, or challenge an administrator over freedom of expression issues. The Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska (AFCON) hopes that by sharing the

concerns and ideas of teachers, we can all work together to provide the best learning environment for young people and the professionals who work with them every school day. AFCON is asking Nebraska teachers to share thoughts on several issues, for publication in the AFCON newsletter, *The Sentinel*. If you aren't comfortable publishing your name, note that concern, and a pseudonym will be used to protect your identity. These topics have been proposed for initial comment:

■ Do you feel pressure to “teach to the test”?

■ How can parents help to make the classroom experience better for their children?

■ Do your school administrators back you up when you need them?

■ What are your major concerns about education in general, or your particular field of education?

■ What are your ideas for improvement?

■ Have local politics interfered with your or the school's ability to educate students?

■ What are the good things about your school, your students, your job?

■ What do you need most as a classroom teacher?

Please email your comments to AFCON Secretary Peggy Adair at:

[matgama@tconl.com](mailto:matgama@tconl.com)

## On the Cover:

Beatrice teacher Mindy Summers works hard to educate her second grade students. After working hours, she spends most of her hard-earned salary with local merchants. For more, turn to

## Page 6.



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# Daphne Loud & Clear

Have you heard the news? I'm a new grandma!

It doesn't take me very long to weave that fact into the conversation with everyone I meet. Daphne Aurora Fulton Plessel, a 7 pound, 12 ounce bundle of pure joy, captured my heart at the very moment she was born in early January. Experienced grandparents had told me that becoming a grandparent would be just as special as becoming a parent. I didn't believe them – but it's true!

I was able to spend a few days in Wisconsin helping the new parents adjust to the newborn routine. While taking a nighttime shift, I quickly remembered how clearly a newborn can convey their needs to anyone within earshot. Daphne makes it perfectly clear when she needs to be fed, when her diaper needs a change, and when she would rather sleep than play peek-a-boo.

Yes, infants have little trouble conveying important messages to those who can help them grow and learn.

So then where, along the way to adulthood, do most of us lose the ability to relay important messages – like the messages that need to be sent to those who can foster and fund a healthy and well-rounded public school system? Why do we find it difficult to deliver the message that quality public education raises all boats?

## Take Control

Public schools are confronted with evermore constricted revenue sources and attacks from outside critics. In the face of such issues, we must take control of the education debate and relay a consistent message to our defunders and detractors. Our message must be honest and true, and must reflect the values embodied by public schools. Our families, friends, neighbors and the general public must be made to understand that our public education agenda puts students at the center of reform. We, as an association, must focus on the message we want to convey.

It's as easy as the ABC's that Daphne will soon learn:

**A – All are Accountable:** We need to convince the public that we must *all* be accountable for student success. Teachers and education support professionals must work to nurture, support, reach and motivate every stu-

dent. Parents and families must make sure that each child comes to school ready to learn, instilled with the values of respect and responsibility. Elected officials need to provide our students and educators with the resources they need.

**B – Build the Foundation of Learning:** We must make sure that our communities, our states and nation are committed to investment in the classroom priorities that build the foundation for student learning. Those priorities include early childhood education; small class sizes; greater emphasis in preparing students for a worldwide economy with up-to-date textbooks and technology; a safe and supportive learning environment; and a well-rounded education that includes history, arts, physical education and music.

**C – Caring, Committed Teachers:** Every student must have a qualified, caring and committed teacher. A greater focus must fall on preparing, mentoring and supporting new teachers. Renewed emphasis must be placed on recruiting and retaining new teachers. We need today's best and brightest students leading classrooms of tomorrow. We must make sure that state policymakers raise and

maintain the standards for those entering the profession.

## Share the Successes

Our message is simple. We support action in the very best interests of America's students. We must be their strongest advocates. Let's build our side of the story rather than constantly responding to the framework that others create. Effective education reform requires all of us to work together, particularly in an economic climate where schools are always asked to do more with less.

Lastly, we need every NSEA member to be a public education advocate. That doesn't mean that we need to wail and cry like a baby – but we must be loud enough and clear enough to bring our story to the attention of policymakers and parents. We must all share our stories, share our successes, and continue our work to achieve the goal of a great public school for every student. That is certainly what I want for Daphne!



**Grandmotherly love:** Newborn Daphne Aurora Fulton Plessel gets some attention from new grandmother and NSEA President Nancy Fulton while in the arms of mom, Kristin Fulton Plessel.



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## The Reason for The Children's Fund

The following note came from a teacher who had reason to call on The Children's Fund:

While unsure of whom to send this note of thanks, I hope you will forward this on to others who are involved with the NSEA Children's Fund. I'm sure you've read a sincere thank you before in regards to the children these funds have helped, but I hope you are able to hear my excitement and relief that one of our students has been provided with hygiene products, necessary underclothing, clothes that actually fit, and a pair of snow boots for his walk to school.

This student's living conditions have been less than desirable as he has been bounced around from the homeless shelter to generous apartment dwellers who have taken in his family. These apartments have far too many people living in them and do not allow for routine bathing or washing of clothes.

As we presented this student with gifts purchased through the Children's Fund, I told him it was from ALL the teachers, even teachers who he's never had but that care deeply for his safety and education. I hope I never forget the look on his face. I don't think I've ever seen anyone more surprised.

Thank you for setting up this fund to make it so easily accessible. It has made a difference in this child's life. He comes to school clean, odor-free, smiling and confident. I am so proud to be a part of NSEA, an organization that cares for students AND teachers.



**Giving back:** These members of the Bellevue Education Association were present to share the BEA's collection of more than \$5,100 for the NSEA Children's Fund with NSEA President Nancy Fulton. Kneeling are Lori Gladson and Trish Swoboda. Standing, from left, are Deb Carlson, Stephanie Cain, Cindy Hudson, Susan Dougherty (front), Jill Comcowich, Kim Gangwish, Fulton, Jan Elliott, Brad Wellmann and Bonnie Sanchez.

# Bellevue, Harvard Gifts Bolster Children's Fund

Two local associations recently boosted the NSEA Children's Fund.

At Bellevue, the second Denim Days event raised more than \$5,100 for the Children's Fund. Brad Wellmann and Gayle Christensen coordinated the event, which was themed "It Takes a Village."

"This has been a great project for the BEA and the Bellevue Public Schools FASE team," said Wellmann. Another district contacted me about our fundraiser because it may do something similar. Hopefully, more money will be raised for

the Children's Fund."

A donation of \$2 by a Bellevue Education Association member earned a day to wear denim. A \$10 donation earned a week-long denim allowance.

Elsewhere, members of the Harvard Education Association gave \$100 to the Children's Fund -- \$25 for each of four NSEA staff members who recently "provided us with exceptional service during the negotiations process." Those NSEA staffers were Midge Dublinske, Maureen Nickels, Kathy Hutchinson and Rebecca Smith.



**The donation:** These members from Harvard presented NSEA President Nancy Fulton with a check for the NSEA Children's Fund. From left are Harvard Education Association Secretary Deb Polacek, President Neil Riley, NSEA President Nancy Fulton, Vice President Lynn DeVries and Treasurer Shelley Stone.



**Final moments of class:** As her charges prepare to leave for the day, Mindy Summers spends a few moments sharing a good story. A second-year teacher at Beatrice, Summers is one of more than 25,000 Nebraska educators who spend their hard-earned salary dollars in Main Street small businesses.

# An Economic Cog

## Educators Like Mindy Summers Spend Their Hard-Earned Salary Dollars on Main Street

As the school day winds down in Mindy Summers' second grade classroom, one of her young students sits at a desk with a long, sad face.

Summers moves in quickly and works to coax out the reason for displeasure, quickly learning that the child is unhappy with spelling test results. She reassures that 91 is a good grade, and that with a little more study, the grade will improve.

Minutes later, as she escorts students out the school door for the day, Summers sees the child's mother waiting nearby.

She routes a beeline toward the mother and spends five minutes in an impromptu parent-teacher conference, updating mom on her child's progress.

"I try to catch and meet with at least one parent every day," says Summers, a second-year teacher at Cedar Elementary School in Beatrice.

As do thousands of other Nebraska teachers, Summers works very hard to ensure student success and to use every opportunity to engage and encourage parent participation.

"Teaching has been a challenge," she said, "but I enjoy it. I love seeing the kids learn every day."

Summers resembles nearly every other Nebraska teacher in another regard, as well. She spends most of her hard-earned salary with retail and service merchants in her hometown.

With more than 25,000 Nebraska K-12 teachers earning an average salary of \$46,000, public school salaries easily stimulate the state's economy to the tune of more than \$1.1 billion each year. That doesn't begin to include several thousand higher education faculty and thousands of educational

support professionals. Education employee salary dollars are spent in and benefit every city and hamlet, every business and bank in the state.

Considering the oft-cited Chamber of Commerce data that a dollar spent on Main Street turns over as many as seven times within a community, the spending by Summers and her education industry colleagues statewide is magnified even more.

Yet the tax cut mantra that dominates the political scene rarely – if ever – mentions the positive economic impact of teachers like Mindy Summers. Rather than embrace the fact that public employees provide vital services and contribute mightily to the state's economy engine, policymakers ignore that long-term investment in order to score momentary headlines with tax cuts.

Such tax cuts are before the Legislature once again.

*25,000 active Nebraska K-12 teachers at an average salary of \$46,000. That's more than \$1.1 billion injected into Nebraska's Main Street economy each year.*

### More Tinkering

Senators are fond of tinkering with the needs-based state aid to schools formula. In fact, tinkering takes place on an almost annual basis and has turned the state aid formula from a needs-based outcome to a "what do we think we can afford" outcome.

Thus, state aid to public schools for this fiscal year is at \$880 million. That's \$70 million less than public schools received last year, and \$130 million less than the state aid formula called for to meet the needs of public schools in 2008-09. Is it any wonder why Nebraska received a letter grade of 'D-' from Education Week magazine in January in the category of state aid to

# By The Numbers

In his State of the State address, Gov. Dave Heineman proposed a combination of income, corporate and inheritance tax cuts to the tune of \$326 million. The cuts are proposed in LB970.

With state aid lagging well behind projected need, and with another revenue deficit projected in 2013-15 – after Heineman is out of office – the last thing public schools and small businesses need is further loss of revenue.

## \$430 Million

Projected state revenue **deficit** in 2013-15, according to the Legislative Fiscal Office.

## \$326 Million

The total cut in income, corporate and inheritance tax cuts the governor proposes in LB970 over the next three years.

## \$252 Million

The difference between \$880 million (the highest proposed state aid appropriation for

2012-13) and the \$1.132 billion the state aid formula originally called for fiscal year 2012-13.

## \$42 Million

The annual amount of inheritance tax dollars (which go to county government) collected in Nebraska. Cutting this tax would further burden county government.

## \$100,000

LB970 would cut the income tax rate for corporations with a net profit of greater than \$100,000. Yet a majority of small businesses don't pay corporate income taxes; only C-corporations do so.

## \$1,012

A Nebraska millionaire's annual income tax savings, under the governor's tax cut plan.

## \$42

The average annual income tax savings, under the governor's plan for the average family of four earning \$32,000 a year.

public schools? That extra \$130 million, by the way, using the average Nebraska teacher salary, would fund the equivalent of nearly 2,900 additional teachers – extra bodies that would lower class size, increase teacher-student contact hours, help close the achievement gap, and, yes, further stimulate the state's economy.

That \$130 million would also cost every one of Nebraska's 1.8 million citizens about \$6 a month, 20 cents a day – a relatively small price to pay to support small businesses in every community.

Meanwhile, the governor's budget calls for a \$51 million reduction in state aid for 2012-13 – a substantial cut that would place more burden on property taxes and force school districts to make more cuts next year.

Fortunately, Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley has introduced LB947, which would maintain 2012-13 state aid at the current level of \$880 million.

### 'Life Consuming'

Summers first considered a career in nursing, but looked into teaching. While at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, she took a job with an after-school program and enjoyed working with kids.

She completed her student teaching in her Beatrice hometown. To save money, Summers lived with her parents. She was offered a contract in Beatrice for the following year, and continues to live at home as she pays off loans, saves to re-

place her 20-year-old car, and eyes moving to a rental or apartment this summer.

"School is life-consuming," she said. "I don't even get to Lincoln to shop and see friends."

She estimates that 80 to 90 percent of her salary that doesn't go to loans or savings is spent in Beatrice. That includes groceries, gasoline, automobile insurance and other necessities purchased from local merchants.

There are roughly 200 educators, not counting administrators, working in the Beatrice system. Based on the average salary figures, that's an infusion of about \$9 million annually into the Beatrice economy. With the exception of the local hospital, it's doubtful that any other local employer nears that kind of impact.

Yet while leaders in any community would lament the closing of a plant that takes 20 employees out of city or region, state aid to school cuts that reduce teaching, administrative, custodial, para-professional or other school jobs is seen as a savings, even though the savings to individual taxpayers might be negligible.

The argument is clear: state aid dollars benefit Nebraska students by providing quality educational materials and quality teachers in every classroom. Those teachers provide a double service by educating our children for future success, and by spending their well-earned paychecks on Main Street, contributing significantly to the state's economic engine.

# Worth Watching

NSEA is tracking these bills, among others, as the 2012 session of the Nebraska Legislature unfolds.

### Teacher Evaluation

NSEA opposes LB809, which would usurp local control of the teacher evaluation process. Omaha Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh's bill would also allow for 'drive-by' evaluations in which the evaluator would not have to observe an entire class period.

NSEA's Jerry Hoffman told senators LB809 is a "solution in search of a nonexistent problem."

### State Aid

Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley has introduced LB947, which would maintain state aid to schools at \$880 million for the 2012-13 school year. Competing proposals would provide less state money next year, resulting in higher property taxes or educational program cuts. Eighteen senators have co-sponsored LB947.

Not coincidentally, Gov. Dave Heineman's proposed tax cuts (LB970, see sidebar) would include a \$50 million tax cut in 2012-13, with the remaining cuts to come in future years. The governor's budget calls for a \$50 million reduction in state aid to public schools next year: His proposed tax cut would come at the expense of children.

### Accountability

NSEA's Director of Instructional Advocacy, Jay Sears, testified on behalf of the Association in favor of LB870, which would provide for an accountability system to measure school performance. LB870, offered by Sen. Greg Adams, York, would allow the Department of Education to develop multiple measures of accountability.

"Besides test scores, student improvement and growth on test scores, and graduation rates, NSEA hopes those multiple measures will include class size, student attendance, school funding, poverty, number of English language learners and numbers of special education students," said Sears.

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# Postmortem for Lost Jobs

## Be Wary of Data Produced in the Coming Political Fray

**Editor's note: This item first appeared in the York News-Times. It was written by Gene Fischer, an NSEA member, a Fairmont resident and a teacher at York High School.**

In his State of the State address Gov. Dave Heineman called for an end to the inheritance tax, which is a revenue source for counties.

The governor pointed out that there are only eight states which have such a tax. Brad Stevens, of Americans for Prosperity, immediately applauded the governor and called the inheritance tax "a job killer."

In doing so Stevens used a term that is being thrown around a lot lately.

Health care costs are now three times what they were in 1990. Nonetheless, the attempt to reform the health care system has been called a job killer.

Attempts to collect sales tax on Internet purchases have also been called a job killer. Even a Buy American clause in a stimulus bill was called a job killer. This list could go on and on.

Sen. Abbie Cornett of Bellevue is sponsoring the bill to repeal the inheritance tax. Referring to a Forbes magazine article about inheritance taxes, Cornett was quoted by the Omaha World-Herald as saying, "When you're in an article like that, it doesn't look very well."

The reference to not looking "very well" was probably appropriate considering the article is titled "Where not to die in 2012."

The online version of the Forbes magazine article went out of its way to make Nebraska look bad. Forbes listed Nebraska as having a top inheritance tax rate of 18 percent.

While that is factually true, it is also misleading. When a spouse inherits property in Nebraska, no tax is levied. When lineal relatives, for example children and grandchildren, inherit property they pay only a 1 percent tax.

But, if you're lucky enough to inherit from a rich uncle you will have to pay a 13 percent tax.

Those of you who inherit from a very good friend will pay at a rate of 18 percent. However, I suspect the bulk of inheritance taxes are paid at the rate of 1 percent.

### Further Challenge to Services

As for the inheritance tax being a job killer Gov. Heineman gave an inadvertent rebuttal to that charge in his State of the State address.

In the speech he listed the state's accomplishments, including Nebraska having the second lowest unemployment rate in America at 4.1 percent.

He also quoted the aforementioned Forbes magazine as ranking Nebraska as the eighth best state for business.

Our next door neighbor, Iowa, has a relatively low 5.7 percent unemployment rate and is listed by Forbes as being the ninth best state in which to do business. They also have an inheritance tax.

This tax isn't a job killer, but it is on a list on which conservatives want to make yet another check mark.

The proposal to eliminate the inheritance tax comes at a time when the revenue environment in which counties operate is already limited.

Along with state-mandated budget restrictions and the elimination of state aid, this change would further challenge the ability of area counties to provide the level of service citizens expect.

### Misleading Claims

The political campaigns of 2012 will look like a postmortem for lost jobs. Politicians for local, state and federal offices all over the country will claim that excessive taxes are hurting economic development. Their claims will be misleading.

In a May 2011 column in the New York Times, Bruce Bartlett shows that **"federal taxes are at their lowest level in more than 60 years."**

It should be said that Bartlett was a domestic policy advisor to President Reagan. In his OpEd piece, Bartlett says the best measure of federal tax rates is total federal revenues divided by gross domestic product (GDP).

Currently federal taxes consume 14.8 percent of GDP. The lowest that rate got during the Reagan administration was 17.3 percent in 1984 (See Bartlett's column at [Twitter.com/blufisch](http://Twitter.com/blufisch)).

In 2011 corporate taxes are expected to be just 1.3 percent of GDP. **Measured this way, our corporate tax rate is the lowest of any member nation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).**

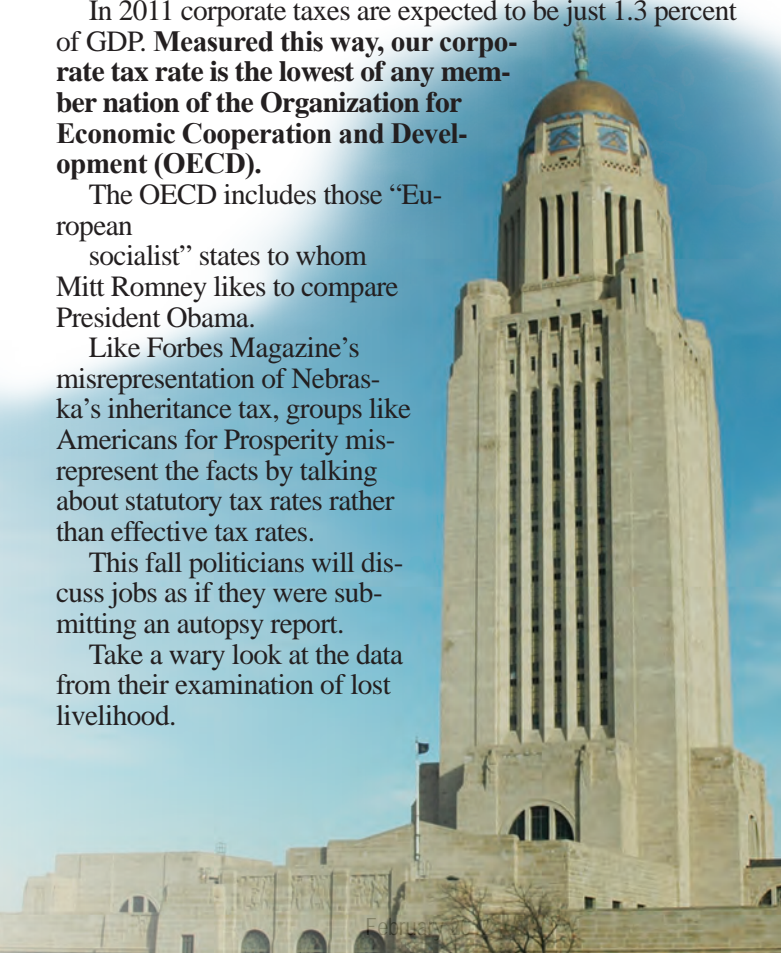
The OECD includes those "European socialist" states to whom Mitt Romney likes to compare President Obama.

Like Forbes Magazine's misrepresentation of Nebraska's inheritance tax, groups like Americans for Prosperity misrepresent the facts by talking about statutory tax rates rather than effective tax rates.

This fall politicians will discuss jobs as if they were submitting an autopsy report.

Take a wary look at the data from their examination of lost livelihood.

*When a spouse inherits property in Nebraska, no tax is levied. When lineal relatives, for example children and grandchildren, inherit property, they pay only a 1 percent tax.*



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# Are You Ready to Read?

## Read Across America Celebrated on March 2

The theme is most definitely green for a very special 2012 Read Across America celebration!

NEA's Read Across America campaign will showcase the 1971 classic *The Lorax*, and in partnership with the new feature film, *The Lorax*, this year's event will be an eco-minded celebration of reading and conservation.

Observed on March 2 (Dr. Seuss's birthday), America's largest reading party is the perfect time to celebrate a love of reading with a grandchild or as a community read-in. NEA's Read Across America materials, including the popular RAA calendar, as well as an educators' guide and Lorax poster, can be found on the RAA website at:

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

The Lorax movie, featuring the voices of Betty White, Taylor Swift, Zac Efron and Danny DeVito, will open March 2. In the meantime:

- Looking for books to recommend? Find them on the RAA website.

- Remember to pledge! Review the Read Across America pledge at the RAA website.

Now in its 13th year, this year-round program focuses on motivating children and teens to read through events, partnerships and reading resources.



**Ready to Read:** Gordon-Rushville physical education teacher Shelly Benben, above, celebrates Read Across America Day by dressing as the Cat-in-the-Hat. Kindergarten teacher Chari Mantle and former nurse Amber Sasse give Benben a hand with makeup. Below, retired Lincoln teacher Pat Etherton represents the Lincoln Education Association as the Cat in the Hat each year, reading to about 2,500 students annually. Helping Etherton as Thing 1 and Thing 2 is her grandson, Eli Etherton, and friend T.J. Taylor.



## Applicants Sought for Higher Ed Leadership Academy

The National Education Association has announced the opening of nominations for candidates for the 10th NEA Higher Education Emerging Leaders Academy (ELA).

The ELA provides hands-on training to new and future leaders in NEA higher education locals to help strengthen the long term-viability and effectiveness of these locals and their state associations.

The Academy is a three-session training program over a nine month period that is open to dues paying higher

education members.

The ELA coursework focuses on four major areas:

- The principles of unionism with an emphasis on effective collective action in states with and without collective bargaining;

- How to use the structure, resources, culture, and work of NEA effectively as a local leader;

- Skill building in areas such as issue organizing, member recruitment and mobilization, and communication;

- Self-reflection and group work in leadership and group dynamics.

The three training sessions are scheduled in May or June; in November; and in February or March. NEA covers all expenses allowable under its travel guideline for all training activities.

The deadline for application is Monday, Feb. 20. See your local leadership for application forms or go to the NEA website at:

<http://www.nea.org/home/37067.htm>

# Nebraska Teacher Salary Update

## Annual Review Offers Information for Policymakers and Negotiators

Nebraska teacher salaries have improved slightly in the latest report from the National Education Association. But that doesn't mean educators have more spending money today than they did 10 years ago.

NEA's annual report, *Rankings & Estimates*, shows Nebraska teachers have moved to a ranking of 43rd in terms of average salary, at \$46,227. Two cautions however: first, that figure is just 82.2 percent of the national average salary of \$54,333; and, second, NEA research indicates that between 1998-99 and 2008-09, Nebraska teachers lost 5.2 percent of purchasing power, using constant dollars.

Further, Nebraska's 43rd place ranking puts the state behind every neighboring state except Missouri and South Dakota. Wyoming, at 15th, tops adjacent states with an average of \$55,861. Iowa is next in line at \$49,626, a 26th place ranking.

The information on these charts comes from the NSEA Bargaining and Research Department and represents the figures for the 2010-11 school year.

The charts serve two purposes: they provide factual information to policymakers, NSEA members and negotiators; and they allow local associations and individuals to make fact-based decisions as they begin negotiations.

The information is also useful to members searching for new employment. However, members in the job search mode would be wise to also ask questions about health care and other benefits provided by each school district's negotiated agreement.

These numbers also provide benchmarks, and allow negotiators, in particular, to set goals based on competitive — and not just comparable or average — measurements.

The charts represent information from the state's 250 K-12 school districts, each represented by an NSEA bargaining unit.

Questions? Contact NSEA's Karen Hunt at:

[karen.hunt@nsea.org](mailto:karen.hunt@nsea.org)

## Regional Salary Rankings 2009-10\*

15th:	Wyoming	\$55,861
26th:	Iowa	\$49,626
28th:	Colorado	\$49,202
39th:	Kansas	\$46,657
43rd:	Nebraska	\$46,227
49th:	Missouri	\$45,317
51st:	South Dakota	\$38,837

*\*According to NEA Research  
(Includes District of Columbia)*



# Nebraska Salary Rankings 2011-12

## Starting Salaries

### Top 25

Lincoln	\$37,431
Millard	\$36,032
Westside	\$34,200
Walthill	\$34,062
Winnebago	\$33,566
Omaha	\$33,460
Bennington	\$33,210
Blair	\$33,053
Rising City	\$33,048
Umo <sup>ho</sup> Nation	\$33,000
Norfolk	\$32,962
Columbus	\$32,900
ESU 05-Beatrice	\$32,735
Norris	\$32,700
ESU 02-Fremont	\$32,627
Ashland-Greenwood	\$32,525
Elkhorn	\$32,508
Raymond Central	\$32,500
Holdrege	\$32,428
Harvard	\$32,400
North Platte	\$32,320
Gretna	\$32,300
Gering	\$32,238
North Bend Central	\$32,022
Arlington	\$32,020

### Bottom 25

Wheeler Central	\$26,425
Spalding	\$26,500
Lynch	\$26,825
Homer	\$26,850
Arcadia	\$26,900
Sargent	\$27,000
Arnold	\$27,050
Ansley	\$27,200
Wauneta-Palisade	\$27,400
Elba	\$27,450
ESU 17-Ainsworth	\$27,500
Brady	\$27,600
Sutherland	\$27,600
Anselmo-Merna	\$27,800
Cody-Kilgore	\$27,800
Mullen	\$27,800
ESU 07-Columbus	\$27,815
Mead	\$27,950
Arthur Co. HS	\$28,000
Hyannis HS	\$28,000
Maxwell	\$28,072
Medicine Valley-Curtis	\$28,100
Ewing	\$28,125
Callaway	\$28,150
Pleasanton	\$28,150

## Master's Degree - Max

### Top 25

Lincoln	\$69,839
Omaha	\$66,221
Papillion-LaVista	\$60,762
Tekamah-Herman	\$58,158
ESU #13-Scottsbluff	\$57,532
ESU #11-Holdrege	\$56,938
Bayard	\$55,860
Fremont	\$55,788
Bellevue	\$55,510
Omaha Nation (Macy)	\$55,440
Kearney	\$54,962
Ralston	\$54,900
Hastings	\$54,856
ESU #03-Omaha	\$54,838
Malcolm	\$54,736
Grand Island	\$54,636
Raymond Central	\$54,600
Syracuse-Dunbar-Avococa	\$54,574
Gering	\$54,450
West Point	\$54,300
Lyons-Decatur	\$54,280
North Bend Central	\$54,260
Norfolk	\$54,222
Wisner-Pilger	\$54,177
Shelby	\$54,121

### Bottom 25

Lynch	\$40,774
Spalding	\$41,340
Cody-Kilgore	\$42,256
Elba	\$42,822
Homer	\$42,960
Arcadia	\$44,116
Amherst	\$44,460
Hayes Center	\$44,714
Wauneta-Palisade	\$44,936
Keya Paha County	\$45,006
Pleasanton	\$45,040
Loomis	\$45,084
St. Edward	\$45,188
Wallace	\$45,240
Brady	\$45,264
Cedar Rapids	\$45,346
Ewing	\$45,352
Greeley-Wolbach	\$45,370
Red Cloud	\$45,552
Harvard	\$45,600
Niobrara	\$45,600
Ansley	\$45,696
Overton	\$45,840
Litchfield	\$45,840
Wynot	\$45,920

## Salary Schedule - Max

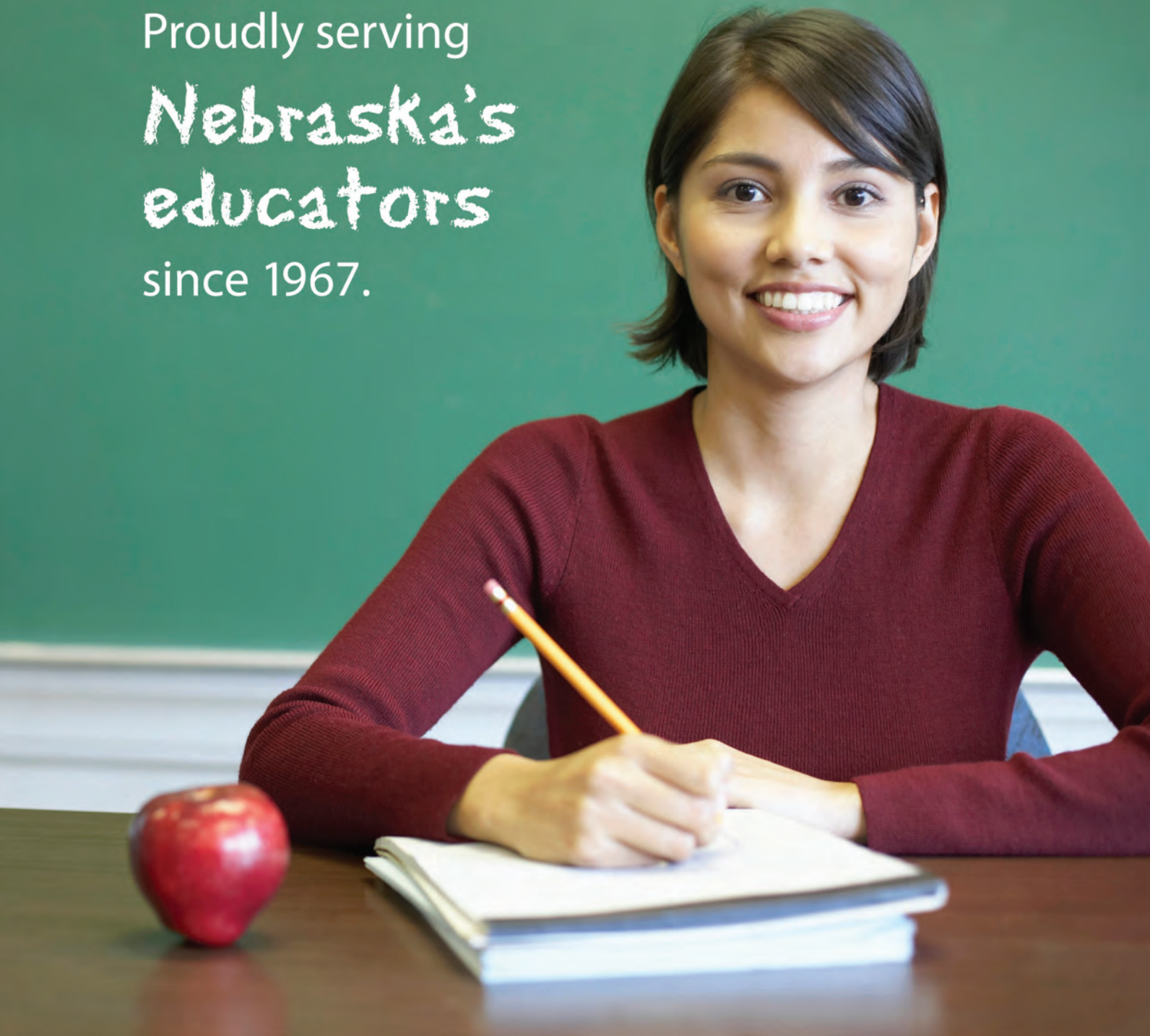
### Top 25

Millard	\$75,761
Lincoln	\$74,276
Omaha	\$70,541
Papillion-LaVista	\$70,134
Fremont	\$69,506
Syracuse-Dunbar-Avococa	\$68,607
Norfolk	\$68,231
North Platte	\$68,195
Columbus	\$68,113
Bellevue	\$66,865
Grand Island	\$66,254
Norris	\$65,727
Gering	\$65,556
ESU #11-Holdrege	\$65,072
ESU #03-Omaha	\$64,940
Ralston	\$64,050
So. Sioux City	\$63,850
York	\$63,571
Kearney	\$63,370
Hershey	\$63,364
Hastings	\$63,248
Plattsmouth	\$63,140
Northwest (Grand Isl.)	\$63,130
Pierce	\$63,048
ESU #01-Wakefield	\$62,813

### Bottom 25

Lynch	\$42,920
Spalding	\$43,725
Arcadia	\$44,116
Arthur Co. HS	\$45,920
Wallace	\$46,400
Elba	\$46,665
Cody-Kilgore	\$46,704
Wauneta-Palisade	\$47,402
St. Edward	\$47,619
West Boyd Unified	\$47,724
Cedar Rapids	\$47,786
Anselmo-Merna	\$47,816
Wheeler Central	\$47,829
Ansley	\$48,144
Wynot	\$48,216
Keya Paha County	\$48,468
Minatare	\$48,841
Ewing	\$48,867
Amherst	\$49,020
Sumner-Eddyville-Miller	\$49,106
Niobrara	\$49,200
Kenesaw	\$49,224
Newman Grove	\$49,278
Greeley-Wolbach	\$49,339
Hayes Center	\$49,384

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# Is NSEA Leadership in Your Future?

## Act Now to Seek NSEA Leadership Positions; Deadlines Are Near

In order to remain strong, your Association needs strong leaders, both at the district level and at the state level.

NSEA will hold elections in mid-March for nearly three dozen district offices, along with several slots on NSEA's

Board of Directors. Those elected will take leadership roles in determining the future of the Association.

The filing deadline for those offices is Sunday, Feb. 19. Voting will take place from Wednesday, March 7, through midnight on Friday, March 23.

To file, simply go to the NSEA website and click on the '2012 District Elections' link.

Select your district, and then select the office you are interested in seeking. All candidates will need their personal 10-digit NSEA membership identification number, which can be found on the NSEA Access membership card, or above the address on the mailing label on *The Voice*.

During the online filing process, all candidates will have an opportunity to provide a 50-word statement. Voters will be able to access that statement during balloting. It may be easiest for candidates to type the statement in a Word or other text document before beginning, and then pasting the statement into the appropriate box during the filing process.

Note that NSEA's Minority In-

### Want to Vote?

Want to vote in the NSEA elections in early March? The online voting process requires that you have a valid e-mail address on file with the NSEA. If you want to provide NSEA with your address, or update your e-mail address, go to the NSEA website at [nsea.org](http://nsea.org) and look for the icon in this box. Click on the link and follow instructions to update your information.



volvement Plan encourages minorities to seek office.

If you do not have access to the Internet, mail your name, address, local association name and a 50-word statement to: NSEA Elections, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Be sure to state which office you are seeking.

In all cases, the deadline for filing is Sunday, Feb. 19. The NSEA website is at

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

## Kay Kahla

Longtime York High School chemistry and calculus teacher and NSEA activist Kathryn "Kay" Kahla, 67, died Jan. 4, 2012, in Lincoln.

Kahla earned her bachelor's degree from Northern State College in Aberdeen, S.D., in 1966 and a master's in education from Kearney State College in 1979. She taught at Conde, S.D., from 1966-1973, and then taught chemistry and calculus at York from 1975-2002. She married Dale Kahla, also a longtime York teacher, in 1965.

Kahla was president of the York Education Association multiple times, and also served as a negotiator.

She was also a member of the Nebraska Board of Medicine and Surgery, chaired the Nebraska Equal Opportunities Commission; was a York City Council member; was a two-time delegate to the Republican National Convention; was an Honorary Life Member of Presbyterian Women; served on the Board of Directors and volunteered for CASA for York County; volunteered and served on the York Adopt-A-Pet; and was treasurer of Presbyterian Women for First Presbyterian Church of York, where she also served as an elder.

Kahla is survived by her husband, Dale, of York; four children and nine grandchildren.

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**EASY IT'S BEIN' GREEN!**

**STUDENT VIDEO CHALLENGE**

Teachers — here's a great opportunity for students to learn the importance of energy efficiency and conservation by writing and starring in their own 30-second TV commercial.

For contest information and official rules, visit [www.nppd.com/videochallenge](http://www.nppd.com/videochallenge)

Contest co-sponsored by Nebraska Public Power District, together with your local public power utility.

# Reaching Full Capacity

## Good Financials Are Vital to Local Association Operations

It's a fact: a strong local association adds to the strength of the state association, and a strong state association, in turn, bolsters the local association.

But what traits make for a strong local association? This series will review the traits of what the NSEA and the NEA call a "Full Capacity Local Association." The series will allow current leaders, future leaders and members to measure the current strengths, as well as opportunities for gaining full capacity, with the local association.

This month's item looks at a core local membership service: the finance system.

Midge Dublinske has gone through the ranks of local association leadership, and is a past president of NSEA's Elkhorn District, where she prepared the district budget. She has now served NSEA members as a UniServ director for 17 years. That background gives her the right perspective on local associa-

tion finances.

Dublinske said that a good local finance system is important to local associations.

"Full capacity locals have clear and effective provisions for collecting membership information, appropriate recordkeeping, accountability and checks and balances, as well as a standing budget committee and a well-trained treasurer," said Dublinske.

She said an effective full-capacity local association should exhibit these external governance traits:

- Charges local dues.
- Requires at least three leader signatures on the bank account and two leader signatures on each check written.
- Maintains a fiscally sound oper-



**Dublinske**

ating budget.

■ Has an executive committee that reviews local finances and the treasurer's report.

■ Makes regular financial statements and treasurer's reports available at general membership meetings.

■ Requires the local treasurer to attend NSEA treasurer trainings.

■ Has a budget that is tied to local association goals.

■ Maintains dues sufficient to fund the local association activities.

■ Is in compliance with NEA affiliation guidelines.

*Does your local meet these recommendations?*

*NSEA has available for use by local associations a complete assessment survey. It will help determine whether a local meets these and other 'full capacity local' benchmarks.*

*Have questions? Contact your NSEA UniServ director at 1-800-742-0047.*

# Brennan Institute Conference Offers CEUs

## Coalition Building, Wisconsin Lessons on April Agenda

Association and union leaders interested in expanding the boundaries of democracy should consider this event for their calendar: the 13th Promoting the General Welfare Conference, sponsored by the University of Nebraska at Omaha's William Brennan Institute for Labor Studies.

The conference is ideal for local union members and their leaders, members and leaders of community and faith-based organizations, faculty and students interested in issues of fairness and justice, and professionals in the field of social work.

The conference is set for Saturday, April 21.

The morning session will include remarks on Understanding the Importance of Creating Messages that Move People, by David Carpio, National Education and Training coordinator for the AFL-CIO.

In addition, these three workshops will run 75 minutes, and will be re-

peated three times during the conference:

■ **Understanding the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act**, offered by Donald Frey, M.D., Creighton University Medical Center's Center for Health Policy and Ethics.

■ **Lessons from Wisconsin**, offered by D.J. Holub, director of Quality Education Advocacy for the Wisconsin Education Association Council.

■ **Building Effective Coalitions and Alliances**, with Esther Lopez, director of Civil Rights and Community Action for the United Food and Commercial Workers.

The closing session will feature Robin Williams, associate director of Civil Rights and Community Action for the United Food and Commercial Workers.

Attendees can receive up to six hours of social work continuing education units. There is a cost to regis-

ter: \$25 for students; \$35 for general admission, until April 13, when the cost goes up \$10 in each category. To register, call the Institute at 402-595-2344.

## EDUCATOR'S EMPLOYMENT FAIR

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Tuesday, March 27, 2012  
9:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

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[careerserv@unk.edu](mailto:careerserv@unk.edu)



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**With his charges:** Earl Hammans, at left in suit and tie, poses with his students for a photograph taken around 100 years ago.



# A Bit of History

## Gift of Hammans' Historical Items Added to NSEA Collection

Earl Hammans began his teaching career nearly 100 years ago. Now, his teaching legacy will live on through items donated to the NSEA archives by a niece.

Hammans graduated from Gibbon High School in 1911, and from Kearney Normal School – now the University of Nebraska at Kearney – in 1913. He taught in a number of rural schools in Buffalo County, as well as one year in Wyoming, before turning to farming for the remainder of his working life.

Hammans died in 1993 at the age of 101. His niece, Janice Martin, has been sorting what she calls her uncle's "well-documented treasures" since. She came across several programs and journals from NSEA's predecessor, the Nebraska State Teachers Association, and sent them to NSEA.

"I'm always so glad when I can find an organization that appreciates these items," said Martin.

Among the items belonging to Hammans that now reside in the NSEA archives:



**Hammans in 1912**



**Hammans at 100**

■ A souvenir program from the 53rd Annual Session, held in Omaha Dec. 26-28, 1918.

The annual session was the equivalent to today's NSEA Delegate Assembly. The program has another tie to history. The gathering was originally scheduled for Nov. 6-8, but was cancelled on orders of the Department of Health due to the Spanish Flu Epidemic. Featured on the schedule was a young Nebraska poet, John G. Niehardt.

■ A program from the 1925 meeting of NSTA District No. 4, held in Hastings.

■ A May 1926 edition of the *Nebraska Educational Journal*, a predecessor of *The Voice*.

Martin also sent another treasure: one of her uncle's Teacher Plan Books, this one dating from October and November 1925. The book includes handwritten lesson plans and notes on the geography of Asia.

NSEA's newly remodeled building includes display space for historic items related to the Association, including buttons and pins, booklets, pamphlets and other NSEA and NSTA memorabilia.

If you have such materials you would like to donate to NSEA, please send them to NSEA Archives, Suite 200, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742, or call 1-800-742-0047.

## Do You Have a New E-Mail Address?

Did this issue of *The Voice* arrive in the wrong e-mail in-box? Would you prefer we send to a different location? Go to the NSEA website and look for the icon in this box. Click on

the icon to provide your preferred e-mail address. That site is at:

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





## Superheroes Aren't Born, They're Made

Boxley Scholarships, covering full tuition, books and fees, are now available for students applying for the MSED online cohort that begins this summer.

**Applications are due by April 15.**

**Empower yourself.** Enroll today in Peru State's online Master of Science in Education program. Affordable, flexible, innovative and relevant – we will help you take on the world.

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## Snookie's Snippets

Today's financial experts warn that Americans are not saving enough for retirement. In light of rising health care costs, the effects of inflation, and other costs in retirement, some are recommending that retirement income should be equal to pre-retirement income. That challenge calls for an early start on retirement savings.



**Krumbiegel**

Meeting the challenge of retirement changes – NEA's Valuebuilder Program provides a variety of options including:

- A 457 Deferred Compensation Plan (includes Roth contributions).
- A mutual fund 403(b)(7) - TSA, IRA.

Valuebuilder's Mary Oestmann Goldberg is a lifetime NEA member and former teacher in the Lincoln Public Schools. She has been working with NSEA members for a number of years. Mary provides both one-on-one counseling and financial seminars in her areas. She is a partner and financial advisor with the Frank, Fox and Hoagstrom Financial Group. Call Mary at 402-423-7505, at 402-429-7003, or toll free at 1-800-378-9490, or e-mail her at:

[moestmann@frankfoxgroup.com](mailto:moestmann@frankfoxgroup.com)

### The NEA Academy: Online Learning for Your Life

Use these resources through the NEA Academy to bolster your job and career:

- Adopt-A-Classroom.
- A teacher support tool that gives instant access to professional development.

### Did You Know?

NEA Member Benefits and H&R Block are offering discounts and special pricing on tax preparation for NEA members. During February, call 1-800-786-3429 or download a coupon for a free federal form 1040EZ, which can only be used at participating H&R Block offices thru Wednesday, Feb. 29, – a \$39 value. Download the coupon at:

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

*Snookie Krumbiegel is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative.*

# Get Instant Access With Teacher Tool

## Professional Development is at Hand With NEA Academy Offering

The NEA Academy and Learning Bridges, a provider of research-based, online professional development programs, now offer NEA members a tool designed to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student outcomes.

The Teacher Support Tool comprises five powerful resources drawn from the Learning Bridges system:

**Instructional Strategies:** Research-based instructional strategies organized by grade level standards and Common Core State Standards.

**Lesson Plans:** Teachers can review and choose from proven, high-quality lesson plans for grades K-8 in a variety of subjects.

**Parent Activities:** Ideas for engaging parents in their child's learning —

available in English and Spanish.

**Professional Development:** Unlimited access to just-in-time learning on instructional strategies and teaching standards.

**Online Community:** A national online learning community allows teachers to ask and answer questions in an online forum.

NEA members can subscribe to the Teacher Support Tool for only \$95 per year (a savings of 40 percent) and get unlimited access to professional development courses along with an online community for collaboration.

For more information about the Teacher Support Tool and how to sign up, visit the NEA Academy online at:

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

# Hot Deals, Discounts!

## Save at Jenny Craig, on Hearing Care, at Sears!

NEA Click & Save, the online discount buying service for NEA members, highlights select retailers and merchants each month. Remember to do something sweet this month for the loved ones in your life! Check out these featured "Buy-lights" for February:

- Hotels.com: Get 10 percent off (through Feb. 20).
- Shoebuy.com: Get 10 percent off.
- Sears: Get \$35 off \$300.
- Home Depot: 10 percent off \$297.

Join the 225,000 NEA members already registered at NEA Click & Save. Shop today at:

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

### H&R Block Discounts

During February 2012, download a coupon for special NEA member discounts! File a federal form 1040EZ for free through Feb. 29, or save \$20 to \$99 on tax preparation at a participating H&R Block tax office or online at Block Live. Call 1-800-786-3429 for details, or visit:

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

### Save on Jenny Craig!

Jenny is all about eating well, staying active and living life!

NEA members receive a Free 30-Day Program. Receive your special offer coupon today. Look for 'Jenny Craig' under the Health & Wellness tab at:

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

### NEA Hearing Care Program

This NEA program includes:

- Free annual screening.
- Availability to NEA members and their family members.
- Referrals to local hearing centers.
- High-quality hearing aids at discount prices.
- A two-year repair warranty.
- Three years of batteries included.
- One year loss and damage insurance.

Find the NEA Hearing Care Program under the Health & Wellness tab at:

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

## Global Exploration Offered to Educators

Global Exploration for Educators Organization (GEEO) is a non-profit that offers summer professional development travel for teachers. Sixteen programs with worldwide destinations are offered for the summer of 2012.

Teachers may earn graduate credit (3 Indiana University credits) and professional development credit. Trips are 8 to 24 days in length and are designed and discounted for teachers. GEEO provides materials and the structure to help bring experiences into the classroom. Trips are open to K-12 and university educators and administrators, as well as retirees. Non-educator guests welcome.

Call toll free at 1-877-600-0105 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. EST, seven days a week. Details are at:

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

## Healthy Smiles Contest Looks at Dental Health

Half of all children show evidence of

tooth decay by kindergarten. Children affected by untreated decay and gum disease can be distracted from learning, miss school and suffer from more serious problems as they grow up.

February is Children's Dental Health Month, and the Nebraska Office of Oral Health and Dentistry plans the first Healthy Smiles Art and Writing Contest. All Nebraska children in grades K-8 may participate. Entries should focus on one of two themes:

- More Than A Smile: How a healthy mouth affects your body.
- Watch Your Mouth – The importance of yearly dental check-ups.

Prizes will be given to two in each category, grades K-2, 3-5 and 6-8. Entries should be postmarked by Feb. 13. For details, call 1-402-471-0166.

## Keats Grant Program Aids Libraries, Schools

The call for proposals by the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation has been made, and the deadline is March 15. Educators will begin the next academic year

knowing whether they have the funding they need for their special program.

Applications will be submitted electronically (a video explains the process). The format simplifies the application.

The Foundation has awarded more than \$500,000 to public schools and libraries since 1987. Applications are at: [www.ezra-jack-keats.org/news/mini-grant-application/](http://www.ezra-jack-keats.org/news/mini-grant-application/)

## Kids in Need Foundation has Grant Opportunity

Applications will be available Feb. 14, for the Elmer's Teacher Tool Kit grants, sponsored by Elmer's Products, Inc. The grants are awarded to K-12 certified teachers who want to replicate proven projects in their own classrooms during the 2012-13 school year.

View available projects on the Kids In Need website. The grant awards are based on financial need, number of children who will benefit, and the teacher's commitment. Consideration is given to first-year teachers. Details are at:

<http://www.kinf.org>

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# Public Values, Public Service

“It’s just business.” That phrase is commonly used to excuse schemes, deceptions, tricks or other ruses that mislead or “put one over” on the consumer public. It also describes the basic difference in orientation between private business and public service. A primary value in for-profit business is efficiency. The goal is profit. The more efficient a business operation is, the more profit can be expected. The value of efficiency in business contrasts sharply with the values of those in public service. But should it? Shouldn’t we expect our public administrators and employees to worry as much about efficiency as any other business does?

Efficiency means operating with minimum cost. The success of private business is measured by profit — the amount of revenue that exceeds expenses. The success of public programs is measured by public value — providing service to citizens.

## Value or Service

That does not mean that public programs should be wasteful or should not pay attention to sound management or business practices, but the goals of business and government are very much different. For-profit business creates private value for the owners of the company by selling service to consumers. Public agencies create public value for citizens, many of whom cannot begin to pay for the services that they receive.

Private trash collectors provide a service to those who can pay for it. The goal is profit. Public garbage and trash collectors collect trash as a service to the community. The goal is a clean, attractive, and safe community.

Public employees provide public service. They guard our property, teach our children, provide clean water, pick up trash, maintain good roads, defend us from our enemies, make our air travel secure, keep parks attractive and safe....the list is very long. So, don’t we owe these public servants our thanks and respect for much of the quality of life we have in this country?

## A Belief in Public Service

Apparently not everyone agrees. Public employees are often depicted as obstructive, unresponsive and overpaid. Main Street America knows better. The men and women in our communities, who deliver the mail, clean our streets, apprehend criminals, guard against fires, teach our grandchildren, or who rush the injured to the hospital — these are people who believe in public service.

They are not “hogs at the trough” as some would ignorantly suggest — they provide a public good that the private market simply cannot or will not. It boils down to this: should we teach only those who can afford the education, put out the fires of only those who can pay the firemen directly, or give emergency care to only those who get into an accident with money in their pockets? Few people want this kind of community.

Private business should be efficient — this provides low cost to its customers and increased profits for its owners. We know that it is far more efficient to teach just those who are the best prepared, to nurse those who have the best chance of recovery, to put out house fires of those houses that are worth saving, or to give police protection for those who have the most property. But is that kind of efficiency really what we want?



**Do we appreciate their service? NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen in front of the Survivor Tree at the site of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing of public employees that left 168 dead.**

## Misleading Rhetoric

The national wave of criticism of “big government, wasteful bureaucrats” or “overpaid public employees” is an insult to those who work hard to maintain quality in our communities. Don’t fall for the rhetoric.

Teachers do not spend their own money on students, police do not die protecting public safety, firemen do not rush into burning buildings, and public nurses do not risk their own health because of their pay or benefits. They do these things because they believe that what serves public interest is the best measure of creating real value in our communities. It is what we should all believe.

# Two Bills Would Affect Seniors

## LB976 Would End Taxes on Retirees' Social Security

The 2012 session of the Nebraska Legislature is under way, and there are two bills that are of interest to seniors, and which will certainly be topics of discussion at the annual Lobby Day for NSEA-Retired.

LB976, introduced by Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, Omaha, would exempt all Social Security income from Nebraska income tax, effective with the 2012 taxable year. Nebraska is one of only a handful of states that continues to levy an income tax on Social Security.

LB239 was introduced by Sen. Charlie Janssen, Fremont, and would require Nebraskans to present a government-issued photo identification card in order to vote at the polls on Election Day. Such legislation would make it more difficult for many Nebraskans to vote, especially seniors, youth, low income citizens, people with disabilities.

Students and low-income people are especially mobile and would have to renew their licenses before each election cycle — time-consuming and expensive, perhaps discouraging them from even making the effort to vote. Many senior citizens and many disabled do not have a driver's license and would have to obtain alternate identification.

Voter fraud in Nebraska is already a felony.

Janssen has pulled LB239 from consideration.

Contact your state senator and express your opinions on LB239 and LB976.

### H&R Block Tax Prep Discounts

On the NEA Member Benefits website you can find out how H&R Block will prepare your Federal Form 1040EZ at no cost through Feb. 29, and for \$39 thereafter; your Federal Form 1040A for \$99 if you have no children/dependents; all other Federal Forms 1040 and 1040A for a \$20 reduction.

To find the savings, go to the NEA Member Benefits website, and click on the National Education Association Member Benefits/NEA Member link. Then type "H&R Block" in the Search space, and on the next page, click on the first of the two H&R Block items. By clicking on the "Get Started" button, you'll be able to download a coupon for savings on using H&R Block to prepare your taxes.

The NEA Member Benefits website is at:

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

### NSEA-Retired Elections in March

Ballots will be mailed in late February or early March.



**A beautiful work:** Long-time NSEA and NSEA-Retired member Lorene Behrends of Lincoln has completed another of her beautiful quilts that will be the prize in a raffle to benefit the NSEA Children's Fund. Tickets for the raffle can be purchased at NSEA-Retired functions, or by calling NSEA's Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047.

Check the list of nominees for NSEA-Retired Board, Delegate Assembly delegates and NEA Representative Assembly delegates. Nominees are listed at:

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

Remember to vote and return the ballots in the postage-paid envelopes before the deadline!

– Tom Black, Editor  
wpc6296@cableone.net

## Annual NSEA-Retired Spring Meeting Dates Set

NSEA-Retired Annual Meeting and Spring Conference

Plan on it: April 18-19, 2012. The schedule calls for an evening social event on Thursday, April 18, and the meeting and conference on Friday, April 19, from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. at the Boys Town Conference Center in Omaha. For details, or to register, call Rebecca Smith at NSEA at 1-800-742-0047, or e-mail her at:

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

You may also register online, and view the agenda after March 26, at:

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

That link also hosts the January 2012 issue of the NSEA-Retired publication, The Advocate under the 'Newsletter Archives' link. Full conference details can be found in that issue.

# Anarchy in the East?

## Parents Allowed to Alter Curriculum

From the “sad but true files” comes this bit of information: legislators in New Hampshire in January overrode the gubernatorial veto of a bill that allows a parent to object to any part of a public school curriculum and have it replaced for their child.

As one analyst wrote, the bill is an attempt to turn public education into anarchy.

New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch vetoed the measure last summer on the basis it would harm the quality of public school education in that state.

The plan allows a parent to object to any curriculum or course material in the school classroom. The parent would be responsible for paying the cost of new curriculum development, but the parent’s name and reason for his/her objection would be sealed by the state.

The Huffington Post rightly noted that “not only does the new law create an administrative nightmare and perhaps insurmountable obstacles to teaching coherent lesson plans, it is a direct assault on the concept of a shared base of knowledge, passed from one generation to the next.”

Even the conservative Manchester (NH) Union-Leader editorial board called the radical law “neither workable, nor sensible.”

But for now, the law is on the books, one more reason to watch your state legislature closely.

## Litchfield Updates Association Identity

Taking action in December, the NSEA Board of Directors approved a

request by members of the former Sherman County Teachers Association to update the association’s name. According to a letter from Association Secretary JoEllen Russell, members voted on Oct. 25 to change the name to Litchfield Education Association.

The request was approved by unanimous vote of those board members present.

## Joe Gregory Named Art Teacher of Year



Gregory

Omaha art teacher Joe Gregory said he was surprised when his name was called as the 2011-12 Nebraska Art Teacher of the Year, as selected by the Nebraska Art Teacher Association.

The honor was presented to Gregory at the annual conference, held this year in Kearney.

Gregory has been with the Omaha Public Schools for 25 years as an adaptive art teacher, and currently works at J.P. Lord Elementary School and Oak Valley Elementary School.

“I’m sure my involvement with NSEA helped me become selected as I learned to be an advocate for all education,” said Gregory.

He said leadership training, conferences and time on the Omaha Education Association Board of Directors provided him with knowledge education at the local, national and state levels.

## Math Work

### \$51 million

■ The tax cut proposed for fiscal year 2012-13 under LB970, introduced by Sen. Abbie Cornett on behalf of Gov. Dave Heineman.

### \$50 million

■ The cut to state aid to public schools proposed by Gov. Heineman for the 2012-13 fiscal year.

“The NSEA gave me many opportunities to learn and enlighten others,” said Gregory.

## Four Schools Said at Blue Ribbon Levels

Four Nebraska schools have earned 2011 Blue Ribbon awards from the U.S. Department of Education. They were Alma Elementary School, Falls City Junior-Senior High School, Hitchcock County Junior-Senior High School, and Lincoln’s Riley Elementary School.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and non-public elementary, middle and high schools where students achieve at very high levels and/or where the achievement gap in narrowing. The program sets a standard of excellence for all schools striving for the highest level of achievement and is part of a larger U. S. Department of Education effort to identify and disseminate knowledge about best school leadership and teaching practices.

# NSEA Honored for Public Relations Work

NSEA won four awards for communications at the Public Relations Council of the States conference in January. The conference is attended by public relations specialists from all of NEA’s state affiliates. NSEA was honored in categories for the following projects:

■ **‘Against All Odds’ Category:** NSEA was honored for its campaign

“Attacks on Employee Rights” which worked to preserve union bargaining rights from last year’s legislative attempts to abolish or limit the Commission of Industrial Relations.

■ **Membership Materials:** NSEA’s annual membership campaign was honored. Among the work cited for recognition were the Association’s Member Services Guide/Desk Calendar, pocket

calendar and room card.

■ **Government and Political Affairs:** NSEA was honored for an outreach campaign entitled ‘Think Smart Nebraska’ which encouraged state aid support for Nebraska public schools.

■ **Special Events:** NSEA was honored for its promotion of a Children’s Fund benefit held in August 2011 entitled “Step up for Kids – A Walk-a-thon.”

# Higher Ed Sets Advocacy Conference

## Kearney Will be Site

The NSEA Higher Education Academy Advocacy Conference is set for Friday and Saturday, Feb. 10-11 at Kearney.

The meeting will bring together leaders and potential leaders from all NSEA higher education local associations, where those leaders will network, build community, and learn from each other and the NSEA professional staff about how to strengthen and improve bargaining, organizing and membership.

Higher Education Academy President Roger Davis said the conference will focus on member engagement.

“Our real focus this year will be to hear from local officers on what is happening in the locals, what the last year was like, and what we need to do as a district over 2012 to make it a successful year,” he said.

Membership growth, he said, is a key topic, and much discussion will focus on building a membership plan, he said.

Sessions will be held at the University of Nebraska-Kearney Student Union.

Conference registration is free and will include a continental breakfast and luncheon on Saturday. The online registration link is on the NSEA website at:

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

## Speaking of Teaching

“All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth.”

—Aristotle  
384-322 B.C.

## Shaped Bubble Experiment

From Diane Postman, a teacher in Yorktown, VA:

“Studying bubbles is a fun way to learn and review the scientific method.

“First, I do an experiment with bubbles made from three different dishwashing liquids labeled A, B, and C. After examining them, the students write a hypothesis about which solution would make the biggest bubbles. They design an experiment in which they blow bubbles with each solution onto a table and

measure the print left. They create tables and graphs of data and then write a conclusion. Second, I pose the question: Can you blow a square bubble? We use the scientific method again to design an experiment. They come up with materials that are either square shaped or could be formed into a square such as pipe cleaners. Many students believe that if they create a square blower and use the best bubble solution, they will then be able to blow a square bubble. Do YOU know if it works?” !”



Sign up for Works4Me at this link:  
<http://www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html>

Mailed By: The Nebraska State Education Association  
Suite 200, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742

## Family of Teachers



**The first five:** Four siblings and a brother-in-law were the beginning of this family of teachers.

From left are Albert Wetenkamp, who taught driver's training and industrial arts in Iowa; John Wetenkamp, who taught science, chemistry and physics at Auburn High School; Maureen McCaw Rohlifing, a former Spanish teacher for the Omaha Public Schools and at Omaha SER; Hal McCaw, who taught and coached at Bryan High School in Omaha for 29 years, as well as for six years in Iowa and Illinois; Edith Wetenkamp McCaw, who taught in a Cass County rural school, taught in Iowa for six years and then taught first grade in Omaha for 20 years; Tim McCaw, who taught, coached and was an administrator with OPS for seven years and is now with the Omaha Fire Department; and Jennifer Vomberg McCaw, who has been with OPS for more than 15 years as a teacher and elementary facilitator. Not pictured is the late Jeannie Wetenkamp Schneider, who taught in Cass County rural schools as well as fourth grade at Plattsmouth.

If you have a family of teachers, snap a photo and send it to: Family of Teachers, c/o NSEA, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508.