



THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ March 2015

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS

*Law Enforcement Professionals Recognize
the Importance of Early Childhood Education*

also inside:
Tuition
Forgiveness
Application
Period Opens
April 1!

Upcoming Assignments

Don't Be Silenced!

March 9

■ **What:** Sen. Laura Ebke has offered LB288, which would silence your right to join colleagues with a collective voice at the state capitol and other policymaking venues.

■ **Details:** LB288 makes it illegal to pay your association dues through payroll deduction. Ebke claims it to be a cost-saving measure, but it is clearly aimed at defunding NSEA. Learn more on Page 7.

Mentor a College Student

March 20-21

■ **What:** NSEA-Retired's successful Intergenerational Mentoring program turns 12 this year. It matches retired teachers with college education majors for informal mentoring.

■ **Details:** A quick get-acquainted program and match-up at NSEA in March. Call Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047 for more.

Delegate Assembly is Near!

April 24-25

■ **What:** NSEA's annual meeting is set for Lincoln's Embassy Suites. Join colleagues in setting Association policy!

■ **Details:** Learn more on Page 18.



On the Job: NSEA members at the NEA Minority Leadership Training Conference were, from left: Terrell Matthews and Che' Drummond, Omaha; Karla Andazola, Lexington; NSEA President Nancy Fulton; Yano Jones, Omaha; Regina Ambroz, Grand Island; and NSEA EMAC Hispanic Rep Manuel Andazola, Lexington.

Minority Training Raises Awareness

NSEA Members Enhance Skills, Knowledge

Six NSEA minority members attended a leadership training conference in San Antonio, one of several such opportunities available to minority members.

"What I learned will help me become a great leader and an advocate for Nebraska," said Omaha Education Association's Che' Drummond. "I became more fully aware of many issues that teachers face each day."

Said Lexington's Karla Andazola: "I brought back a lot of new experiences, inspiration, and new information based on the mock campaign and RA."

Omaha's Yano Jones said "What I found the most interesting was the creation of flyers and campaign materials for elected positions."

Terrell Matthews, Omaha, appreciated working alongside and getting to know members from other states. Matthews said he gained skills in teaching, union strategies and other areas.

NSEA EMAC Hispanic Representative Manuel Andazola of Lexington was impressed by NEA's leadership team: President Lily Eskelsen García, Vice President Becky Pringle and Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss. He said they "represented struggles and successes among minorities and had accomplished a monumental task within such a grand organization."

The NSEA Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee also has these conference opportunities:

■ Black Caucus Issues: April 24-26, Chicago.

■ Hispanic Caucus Issues: May 22-25, El Paso.

■ American Indian/Alaska Native and Asian/Pacific Islander Caucus: July 13-21, Seattle/Vancouver.

For details, contact EMAC Chair Edward T. Ventura Jr. at:

venturaomaha@gmail.com



Cover Story:

Educating a child is an expensive proposition. But it isn't nearly as expensive as it is to incarcerate an adult. For that reason, about 80 Nebraska law enforcement officers, and 5,000 of their colleagues nationwide, support early childhood education through the Fight Crime: Invest in Kids initiative. For the details, turn to

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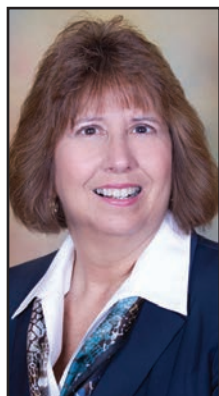
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The Things We Can't Count



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“

The point is this: time in any given school day is tight. Teachers need every moment to teach; children need all the time in every school day to learn.

”

Award winning children’s book illustrator Christopher Myers last month explained that he was in a classroom when a child asked him one of those unanswerable questions that kids seem to ask.

You know, one of those questions like “how do you wash a fish?”

The particular question posed to Myers was this: How many words does it take to make a good story? The question made Myers realize that some things just were not meant to be counted.

“There are things that you can’t count, things that we try to measure,” said Myers. “We are taught in our world of metrics and testing that you need to find a way to measure the progress of a student.

“You can’t really count these things. You can’t count the moment that you reach a child. There is no way to measure it in any way.

“We,” he said, meaning educators, “are in the business of that which is not countable.”

‘Locked Up With Eighth Graders’

“Countable” seems to have been a theme in my work in recent weeks, which is interesting given that NSEA has successfully pushed for introduction of a bill in the Legislature – called the Time to Teach, Time to Learn Act. LB435 would meet two needs prioritized by members: smaller class size and more time to teach.

Consider the issues that affect “time to teach.”

First is the amount of time in the school day – a countable, static, measurable period of time. Second is the infinite number lessons, rules, directives that an educator must impart into that set period of time called the school day.

Jamie Vollmer recognizes that while the length of the school year and school day has remained fairly static for 100 years, the number of items educators are asked to “teach” has grown exponentially.

Vollmer is an author, speaker and consultant and once was a harsh critic of public schools. His last 25 years have been spent working with school districts, education associations and others to halt the erosion of public trust in public education.

“No one has the right to criticize public education unless he or she has spent a warm Friday afternoon in May locked in a room with eighth graders,” says Vollmer. “I will go to my grave

with that smell in my nostrils.”

The Long List

Vollmer, author of *Schools Cannot Do It Alone*, has put together a decade-by-decade list of duties added to the day-to-day tasks of educators since 1900. He calls his list The Ever Increasing Burden on America’s Public Schools.

America’s public schools, says Vollmer, were established in the 1640s to teach basic reading, some writing and math, along with some civics.

My, how things have changed.

From 1900 to 1910, schools added nutrition and health instruction. The next 20 years added physical education, including organized athletics; home economics; and mandated school transportation.

In the 1940s art, music, speech, drama and business education became part of the curriculum. In the 1950s, science and math were expanded and driver’s education and (gasp!) sex ed were added.

The 1960s added consumer education; the 1970s brought about parenting classes, special ed and Title IX. Since the 1980s, multicultural education, inclusion, health and wellness, bullying prevention have joined the school day. That small sampling from Vollmer’s list does not include standardized testing!

Children Do Count

The point is this: time in any given school day is tight. Teachers need every moment to teach; children need all the time in every school day to learn.

That brings us back to Christopher Myers, who made his remarks at the NEA Foundation Gala in Washington, D.C. He accepted the First National Bank of Omaha Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education, recognizing the work of Myers and his late author father, Walter Dean Myers.

Teachers understand what is not countable. But, he said, “if you get involved in this narrative of what is not countable you realize that the world is telling all these children that they don’t count.

“The same world that wants to measure everything is also telling children that they don’t count,” said Myers. “We are people in this room that are telling children that they do count. That is our shared mission.”

That mission just takes time – to teach.



Finding Nebraska’s Great Public Schools (GPS)

NSEA locals from around the state appear or are mentioned in this issue. Look for:

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Certification Gains

Vote to Certify a ‘No-Brainer’ for Leyton Members

Thirteen NSEA locals completed certification elections in the last year, growing the number of locals that no longer need to seek formal recognition from their local school board before bargaining can begin.

A successful certification election guarantees that the local association will forevermore represent all members of the bargaining unit in negotiating terms and conditions of employment.

Without certification, the local association must file a written, formal request for recognition with the school board each year before bargaining can begin. Certification eliminates the chance that the request is overlooked – or, worse – that an uncooperative board of education might deny the request.

80 Percent Goal

The recent number of certifications shows broad support for local association handling of bargaining, said Trish Guinan, NSEA Director of Advocacy.

The first step of the process allows all members of a bargaining unit – association members and non-members alike – to signal support for an election by signing authorization forms. In most of the 13 recent elections, 90 percent or more of bargaining unit members favored an election.

“That tells us that members and even non-members are in favor of their local association bargaining their terms and conditions of employment,” said Guinan.

In 2012, the Omaha Education Association collected authorization forms from 84 percent of more than 4,000 bargaining unit members. NSEA now aims for an 80 percent collection rate of signed forms.

“When Omaha hit 84 percent, that told us 80 percent was a reasonable guideline,” said Guinan.

‘Less Stressful’

The decision to pursue a certification election was easy for members of the Leyton Education Association, located in Cheyenne County, on the southern edge of the Nebraska panhandle.

Guinan and NSEA Organizational Specialist Matt Pittman met with many LEA members last fall to explain certification benefits. Later, LEA negotiator Ann Hurt met the rest of the membership to make sure they understood the certification purpose and process.

LEA President Jill Bartling said it was an easy decision.

“We have a good rapport with the board and the superintendent. This has made the certification process less

A Baker’s Dozen Approvals

These 13 local associations conducted successful certification elections over the past year. A successful election forever removes the requirement that a local association must, each year, request formal recognition from the Board of Education as the official bargaining agent for the district’s educators.

The first number indicates the percentage of bargaining unit members who signed authorization forms indicating they favored a certification election. In some cases, bargaining unit members are not members of the association, but their assent to hold an election indicates backing of the bargaining unit’s work.

The last number shows the ballots cast in favor of, and against, certification.

Local Association	Auth Form%	Election Results
Columbus.....	95%	181-9
Valentine.....	87%	56-0
Arapahoe.....	92%	22-2
Shelton.....	80%	16-0
Hyannis.....	100%	12-0
Gibbon.....	91%	33-0
Garden County.....	88%	17-0
Leyton.....	100%	16-0
Banner County.....	95%	17-1
Neligh-Oakdale.....	100%	33-0
Walthill.....	100%	35-1
Scribner-Snyder.....	89%	17-0
Lexington.....	94%	109-1

stressful because of our good working relationship,” she said.

Hurt lauded the long-term benefit.

“Our local agreed that it was a ‘no-brainer,’” said Hurt. “The work was minimal compared to the benefits for future negotiators.”

Questions about the certification election process? Call your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

Don’t Ignore Measles: Learn About Vaccinations!

NEA’s Health Information Network has Materials for Educators and Parents

Fifty years ago measles, mumps and chicken pox were part of growing up. These days it is easy to minimize the dangers of vaccine-preventable diseases, especially since they are so rare. But the very real risks are still out there. Consider this story.

In late 1990 and early 1991, Philadelphia was in the grip of a measles epidemic. At its center was a religious group that refused immunizations for themselves and their children. Children with measles developed high fever; a red, raised rash that started on the face and spread to the rest of the body; and “pink eye.”

It got worse. Seven children in the church developed severe pneumonia as the measles virus infected their lungs. The lungs filled with pus — breathing became fast, labored




and difficult. By the time the children got to the hospital, it was too late. They died from measles.

Vaccines are a great public health story.

The CDC estimates vaccinations will prevent more than 21 million hospitalizations and 732,000 deaths among children born in the last 20 years.

The NEA HIN is a staunch supporter of recommended vaccines, and shares concerns of parents and educators about the dangers posed by vaccine-preventable diseases. The NEA HIN also supports educational programs for students, employees and the general public that will promote awareness of serious health issues. NEA HIN offers educators and parents free resources to understand vaccinations. For more, go to:

www.neahin.org/educator-resources



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Corporate School Deja Vu

Will Senators Turn Back, Again, the Corporate/Charter Retread?

NSEA Asks Senators to OK LB435, Allowing Time to Teach, Time to Learn

In each of the past two years, state senators have killed bills that would have allowed up to five corporate schools in Omaha.

Now, supporters are back for a third try, again with the same language. LB616, offered by O’Neill Sen. Tyson Larson, would plop up to five corporate/charter schools in Omaha.

At a February hearing before the Legislature’s Education Committee, NSEA had two basic messages. First, NSEA reminded senators that they have twice voted to kill LB616. NSEA suggested that corporate school backers are riding a dead horse.

“Perhaps it is time to dismount,” Jay Sears, NSEA director of Instructional Advocacy. Second, said Sears, under existing rules, public schools can now meet all the “reform” aims and goals of LB616, and can do so without diverting already inadequate public school resources to yet another education fad.

“All of the innovations promised in LB616 and its predecessors can be accomplished right now under current statutes, rules and regulations,” said Sears. “In fact, the Omaha Public Schools is making many of those changes as we discuss the false alternative that is LB616.”

Sears said six schools in Omaha’s Collaborating for Equity program have shown significant improvement in achievement. He also questioned the end game of sponsors, who have yet to meet with Omaha school officials about LB616.

“Given their failure to work with the school district they target with this legislation, one can only assume they want to remove collective bargaining and bypass local control by an elected school board,” he said. “Those are the only two prohibitions in LB616. All of the rest can, and is, being accomplished in Nebraska as I speak.”

‘Well-Rounded’

Former Nebraska NEA Director Carolyn Grice is now an assistant principal



At the Testimonial Table: Omaha South Vice Principal and NSEA member Carolyn Grice, foreground, was among many who testified against LB616 and the corporate school scheme. Also testifying were, from left, Omaha Central High School senior Isaac Pavkovic; Omaha parent Julie Kalkowski; and Omaha pediatrician Dr. Karl Roth.

at Omaha South High School, a visual and performing arts/information technology magnet. Within the school are career academies in piano, dance, guitar, pottery, metal-smithing, filmmaking and more. With a 71 percent Hispanic population, South is also a dual language high school.

“It is my belief,” said Grice, “that the variety of offerings we provide, the opportunity to participate in so many interest areas, the diversity of the student body, helping our students get along with those who are different than they are, provides a well-rounded education not possible with charter schools.”

LB616 is still in the hands of the Education Committee.

NSEA has had a strong presence at legislative hearings during February, testifying on these legislative issues of importance over the past three weeks:

Time to Teach, Learn

NSEA President Nancy Fulton told the Education Committee that reducing class size and allowing teachers time to teach are two of the highest priorities identified by members in the past year,

LB435 proposes a Class Size and Instructional Time Task Force to research and assess class size and instructional

Don’t Be Muzzled by LB288!

LB288 poses a serious threat to the work that gives you a voice in policy-making, protects your employment rights, and assists you in improving your benefits and salary.

Most personally, LB288 limits your ability to determine how you decide to disperse your paycheck. Ultimately, LB288 is aimed squarely at silencing your voice by defunding your local and state education associations.

The Legislature’s Business and Labor Committee will hear testimony on LB288 at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 9.

Introduced by Sen. Laura Ebke of Crete, LB288 is paraded as a cost-saving or “payroll protection” plan. In truth, it is “paycheck deception” – a solution in search of a problem with no other purpose than to defund and hamper Association efforts to influence pro-public school policymaking and the protections membership provides.

Tell members of the Legislature’s Business and Labor Committee to stay out of your personal accounting and bank transactions. E-mail them at:

- Sen. Burke Harr:.....bharr@leg.ne.gov
- Sen. Dave Bloomfield:dbloomfield@leg.ne.org
- Sen. Sue Crawford:scrawford@leg.ne.gov
- Sen. Laura Ebke:lebke@leg.ne.gov
- Sen. Jerry Johnson:jjohnson@leg.ne.gov
- Sen. John McCollister:jmccollister@leg.ne.gov

time in Nebraska schools, and to make recommendations for creating incentives for school districts to reduce class size and increase teaching time. Fulton urged adoption of LB435.

No Mandated Grade Retention

NSEA Director of Government Relations Jason Hayes urged senators to oppose LB617, a rehash of a 2014 bill requiring school districts to hold a child back at the end of third grade if the child fails to meet specified reading levels.

“Local school districts are determining retention in grade on an individual student basis with consultation among parents, educators and administrators. This is as it should be,” said Hayes. “Nebraska does not need a state mandated retention policy that shames students, parents, educators and districts.”

EHA Insurance Pool Threat

NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen told the Legislature’s Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee that LB78 poses a very real threat to the health insurance plan that has served Nebraska educators for nearly 50 years. LB78 would let school districts to join with cities and counties to form insurance risk pools.

Since NSEA formed the Educator’s Health Alliance predecessor in 1967, nearly every Nebraska school district has participated, creating one of the largest risk pools in the state. Today’s EHA plan covers 242 of 245 K-12 districts, some higher ed members and 77,000 Nebraskans.

“Our large group affords predictability and stability for all districts and, in Nebraska, especially protects small districts from the disastrous effects of a major health care case in their district,” said Christiansen.

LB78, he said, would allow creation of small, undercapitalized, self-funded pools, with increased risk.

“In insurance, size matters,” he said. “The Rule of a Large Pool/the Law of Large Numbers is a primary principle in insurance. All things being equal, the larger the group, the smaller the risk in accurately predicting the amount of incidence of health events. This means more accuracy for the insurer and lower costs to the participants.

“We have that in the EHA.”

He also noted that, within the EHA plan, all risk is to the insurance company. With self-funded plans, the ultimate risk lies with the individual.

Loan Forgiveness Deadlines Near

NSEA members interested in Nebraska’s tuition loan forgiveness plan have two opportunities at hand:

- A new round of applications for tuition dollars will open up on Tuesday, April 1;
- State senators are considering LB589, which would extend and expand funding for the tuition reimbursement program. **Senators need to hear from educators that the program is worth funding well into the future.**

Application Process Opens

Applications for the 2015-16 edition of the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching (EETP) Program will be available on the Nebraska Department of Education website at 9 a.m. on Tuesday April 1, through May 10. That website is at:

www.education.ne.gov/EducatorPrep/TopPages/EETP

The 2014-15 award is for classes that begin between July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016. Additional details that might be helpful prior to applying for the award are found on the website now. The website materials should be self-explanatory; however, it is important to note that the 2015-2016 EETP program:

- Requires that the applicant is enrolled in an approved graduate program that results in a degree.
- Allows applicants to request funds for approved classes that start between July 1, 2015, and June 30, 2016.

Current and previous recipients must apply again if funding for the 2015-16 award year is needed. NDE will send out a reminder e-mail to current recipients in March.

How to Keep and Expand the Program

LB589 will extend funding for the loan forgiveness program through 2017, and will increase funding to \$2 million in 2016 and to \$3 million in 2017. Those who have used the program to acquire advanced degrees – or those who anticipate using the program in the future – are urged to contact their state senator and ask for support of LB589.

Educator Effectiveness

LB239 would provide funding in the Nebraska Department of Education for a coordinator to support the teacher and administrator evaluation system that NSEA helped pilot through 17 local associations the past two years.

Nebraska 2014 Teacher of the Year Kristi Bundy, Ashland-Greenwood, told the Education Committee that her district’s pilot empowered teachers to use data to make informed decisions, set goals and monitor student progress.

“Possibly the most powerful piece that our district sees is that it has allowed our district to develop a laser focus in our professional development to directly support teacher action plans and, consequently, directly support student achievement,” said Bundy.

NSEA’s Sears said LB239 would also provide for a grant program to allow school districts to adopt an evaluation program based on the models developed by the pilot districts. The models should be ready for use by fall.

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Beyond the 'Usual Suspects'

Early Childhood Education Gets Broad Support from Nebraska Law Enforcement

With 40 years on the beat, Tom Casady's personal encounters and observations detailing the misadventures of uneducated or under-educated lawbreakers could likely fill hundreds of police blotters.

So several years ago, when Casady came across an organization called 'Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' at a convention of law enforcement professionals, he was on board.

"'Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' is exactly what I believe," said Casady, Lincoln's public safety director.

"I support their mission of using the influence of police and prosecutors to make the point with the public and policy-makers that early childhood education is important to public safety," he said.

Casady believes it is important for citizens and lawmakers to hear about the importance of early childhood education – and, he believes, after school programs, as well – from voices other than what he calls "the usual suspects."

The voices of those "usual suspects" belong to teachers, superintendents, administrators and others in the education family who are usually alone in vocalizing support for early childhood education.

Lending law enforcement's voice to the pro-early childhood tenor exposes policymakers and citizenry to a reasoning that is not always obvious. Casady is one of about 80 law enforcement officials across the state who have joined the Fight Crime initiative.

"Too often, people think of early childhood education as fluff pushed by do-gooders spending tax dollars on things that aren't important," said Casady.

"We're saying 'no, this is important.' Kids with early childhood education are more likely to be productive adults and less likely to be involved in crime. This all pays off in better public safety."

The long-term payout, said Casady, is huge.

Savings at the Back End

Nebraska's prisons are currently operating at 159 percent of capacity. According to recent news reports, the state's prisons hold more than 5,220 inmates at an average annual cost of nearly \$36,000 each.

On the flip side, the Census Bureau reports that in 2011, it cost about \$10,800 per student to educate a child in a K-12 system in Nebraska. The cost to educate a pre-kindergarten child in Nebraska in 2011 was about \$2,650, according to the National Institute for Early Education Research.



Heed the Cup, Heed the Cop: City of Lincoln Public Safety Director Tom Casady is a believer in early childhood education. He says a little cash spent on early childhood education up front will save big dollars on the back end.

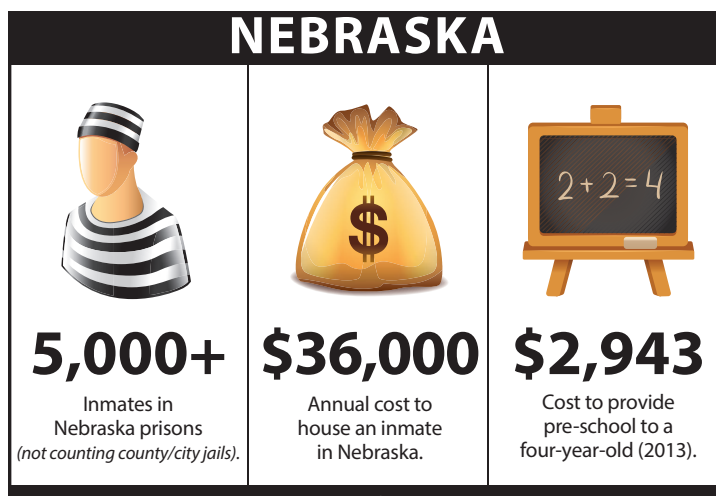
"The research is very good in this field," said Casady. "There is long-scale research – virtually a lifetime – that shows that early childhood education pays off over time."

In other words, Nebraska taxpayers can spend up to \$10,800 a year today to educate a child, or spend \$36,000 a year in today's dollars to incarcerate an adult in 15 or 20 years.

With that concept in mind, the Fight Crime: Invest in Kids coalition last fall issued a report appropriately entitled "I'm the Guy You Pay Later." The report cites a study that followed children enrolled in a high-quality preschool program through Chicago's Child-Parent Centers. The study found that those children were 20 percent less likely

to be arrested for a felony or to be incarcerated as young adults than were those who were not enrolled.

Nebraska spends more than \$190 million each year on



state prisons. Douglas County alone spends \$30 million each year to house and care for inmates. Imagine the savings if those numbers were cut by 20 percent.

“It is always hard to convince people that involvement up front is a savings at the back end,” said Casady. “I’m a believer that early childhood education is a savings. It doesn’t cost a lot, by comparison.”

\$25,000 ‘Profit’

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids bills itself as a “national, bipartisan, nonprofit, anti-crime organization.”

Membership includes more than 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecuting attorneys and others.

Last fall’s report said that “a sophisticated analysis of over 20 preschool programs for disadvantaged children demonstrated that quality preschool returned an average ‘profit’ (economic benefits minus costs) to society of nearly \$25,000 for every child served by cutting crime and the cost of incarceration and reducing other costs such as special education and welfare.”

The report also cited these benefits of early childhood education programs:

■ **Fewer dropouts:** The Chicago Child-Parent Center is a preschool program that has served more than 100,000 children and followed them up to age 28. The program reported a 29 percent increase in high school graduation rates by participants.

■ **Less crime:** Children not served by Chicago’s CPC are 70

percent more likely to be arrested for violent crime by age 18.

■ **Better school outcomes:** An evaluation of Omaha’s Educare early childhood program found that children who had been in the program for three or more years had an average score of 96 on a standard vocabulary test taken before kindergarten, a full 20 points higher than those in the program less than a year.

Pay Now or Pay Later

According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, Nebraska spent \$13 million on early childhood education in 2013, reaching about 26 percent of four-year-olds. Combined with federal and local dollars, that totaled about \$2,943 per child.

The state added another \$3.2 million to early childhood funding in 2014, but clearly, there are advantages to more funding for early childhood education.

Casady said the Nebraska members of the Fight Crime initiative are willing to work with local educators in spreading the message about early childhood education to local school boards, Rotary Clubs, policymakers and others. To find a member near you, contact the Fight Crime coalition at:

www.fightcrime.org

The message is simple. As Casady said at the release of the Fight Crime study last fall: “Pay for early education and care delivered with high-quality to Nebraska kids now, or pay far more later.”



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What It Means to Belong to EHA

Health Plan is One of State's Oldest and Most Stable Insurance Pools

By Greg Long

Educators Health Alliance Field Representative

As an educator and enrollee in the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska health care plan, you are also a member of the Educators Health Alliance.

EHA is one of the largest, oldest and most stable insurance pools in Nebraska.

EHA membership has more than 72,000 participants and includes all but three of Nebraska's 245 K-12 school districts, along with members at several institutions of higher education. The EHA board includes 12 voting members – six representing NSEA; and three each from the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the Nebraska Association of School Boards.

In the late 1960s, NSEA members and staff successfully organized the first border-to-border pool of school districts into one, carefully designed plan that offered the same benefits to all Nebraska teachers. That plan evolved into today's EHA, with the NCSA and the NASB brought into the plan in the last 10 years. The current structure takes at least seven 'aye' votes on the board of directors for passage of any changes to coverage or premiums. The structure ensures representation for all organizations, and instills a working culture of cooperation.

'Large Numbers'

Even with a rapidly changing health insurance industry, the EHA remains stable.

First, the EHA offers a wide variety of health plan options to meet the needs of school districts, teachers and staff. Second, EHA provides a level of stability that only a large group can provide, relying on the basic principle of "Law of Large Numbers." That allows large claims to be absorbed with minimal impact to the plan's finances or rates.

Finally, the EHA board manages the well-being of members prospectively rather than retrospectively, with offerings like the top-notch wellness plan. Because your school district is part of the EHA, you are part of the wellness program and can continue this benefit into retirement. The wellness plan has been a key asset in keeping EHA rates well below national trends.

EHA also allows continuation of health care coverage from retirement until Medicare eligibility. Retiree benefits include various options to meet the needs of all members. Thus, your participation insures the security of a plan that is supported by active participants, but also by your retired colleagues.

It is worth mentioning that some districts have considered pulling out of EHA in search of cheaper, perhaps self-funded insurance plans. In fact, LB78 now before the Legislature would allow school districts to pool with cities and counties in self-funded schemes.

Unlike health insurance that covers risk and shifts

that risk to a third party (Blue Cross and Blue Shield, for instance), a self-funded pool maintains the risk within the resources of that local government pool. However, in the case of insolvency of such a local government pool, the risk transfers to the employee. With self-funding pools, the individual is responsible for any healthcare obligations not met by the pool.

Pushing Back

In sum, in a world of health care uncertainty, you can count on EHA to weather the storm of high premiums and out-of-pocket costs that plague other plans. The EHA has enjoyed a period of unparalleled premium stability for 14 years, as well as lower out-of-pocket costs even as the Affordable Care Act regulations take hold.

Meanwhile, other plans see double-digit increases. According to the Dec. 5,

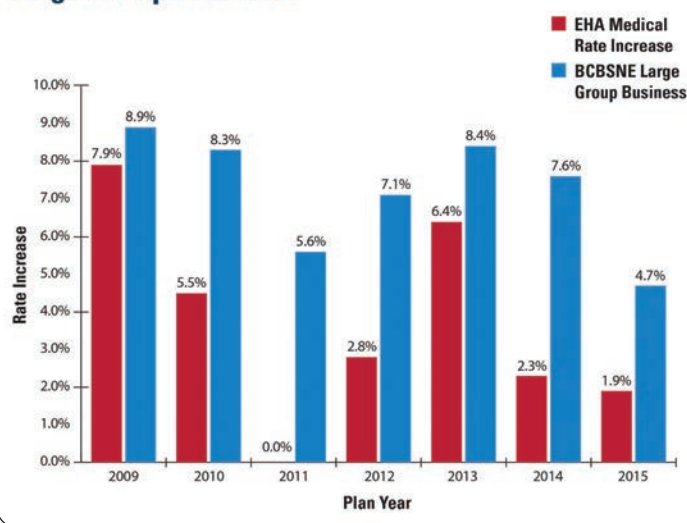
2014, Lincoln Journal-Star, Lancaster County employees are looking at a 19 percent increase this year for a self-funded plan. That is more than the EHA plan has increased over the past six years combined.

The EHA Board of Directors has developed a single mindset of pushing back against the tide of higher out-of-pocket costs and double-digit rate increases. Thus, the EHA plan continues to undercut national rate trends.

The EHA is committed to a health care plan that is the most stable product in Nebraska. If you have questions or comments, contact Educators Health Alliance Field Representative Greg Long at 402-440-1358, or at:

greg@chaplan.org

Summary of Rate Increases EHA vs. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE) Large Group Business



Not close: This chart shows that EHA premium increases are consistently lower than increases of other 'large group business pools' in Nebraska. Meanwhile, a June 2014 report by the Commonwealth Fund indicates that nationally, insurance premiums in 2008, 2009 and 2010 increased an average of 10.9 percent, far more than the EHA rates during those years.



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EDUC 553	Using the Internet	Oct 3 - Oct 30, 2015	3
EDUC 540	The Master Teacher	Oct 31 - Nov 27, 2015	3
EDUC 600	Sociology of Education	Jan 9 - Feb 5, 2016	3
SPED 500	Inclusionary Practices	Feb 6 - March 4, 2016	3
EDUC 552	Introduction to Multimedia Authoring (or elective or Graduate Transfer Credit)	March 5 - April 1, 2016	3
EDUC 621	Curriculum Development	June 6 - July 29, 2016	3
EDUC 602	Statistical Methods and Data Analysis	June 6 - July 29, 2016	3
EDUC 569	Teachers as Collaborative Leaders (or elective or Graduate Transfer Credit)	Sept 3 - Sept 30, 2016	3
EDUC 623	Assessment of Instruction (8-week capstone)	Oct 1 - Nov 25, 2016	3

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Safety Through Prevention

As State's School Security Chief, Palmer Urges Relationship Building

Jolene Palmer believes the best way to thwart school shootings that have become almost commonplace in America is to build relationships with students.

Armed response, she says, is reaction to what has already happened.

"We want schools to have a reaction plan, but just as important, if not more, is how to prevent school violence in the first place.

"Building relationships is the key," said Palmer. "I hope the safety plan includes as much prevention action steps as it does reaction."

Palmer brings that philosophy with her as the Nebraska Department of Education's new state school security director. The Legislature funded the position in 2014 with LB923. An earlier school safety/security director position was cut in 2009 due to budget restraints.

Her vision is shaped by years as a third grade teacher at Tri County Schools; as an elementary principal at St. Paul; by 15 years as an educational advisor and DARE coordinator for the Nebraska State Patrol; and by nearly 10 years as project coordinator for the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Program (PBIS) for the department.

Her doctoral dissertation studied institutional climates, with a focus on the Mayo Clinic.

Security Awareness

The Legislature gave LB923 a 45-0 vote of approval, and amended provisions of several other school and student safety proposals.

Palmer's duties include recommending minimum school security standards by Jan. 1, 2016; assessing the security of each public school building by Aug. 31, 2017; identifying deficiencies in school security and recommending remedies to school boards for such deficiencies.

Now that she has been on the job, Palmer will push for standard signage and protocol in school districts regarding fire, tornado and other emergencies.

"On any given day, there are students and parents visiting neighboring schools for music contests, athletic and other events. It is evident to me that schools need familiar signage and similar protocols to keep people safe," she said.



Relationships first: Jolene Palmer says building meaningful relationships with students is an important way to provide safe, secure school buildings.

Palmer will also establish security awareness and preparedness tools and training for school staff, and will establish research-based instructional models for staff, parents and students to address underlying causes for violent attacks.

That is where she says the understanding of school climate is important. She says the gunman in nearly every school shooting had little to no connection with school staff and peers.

"While we want all schools to have a reaction plan, just as important, if not more, is how to prevent school violence in the first place," she said.

A state standards committee for safety and security is also in the works, and will include law enforcement and fire officials, architects, insurers and others.

Suicide Prevention

On Palmer's initial to-do list was development of a suicide awareness and prevention training model for K-12 schools. Former Lincoln Sen. Amanda McGill's plan was part of the final draft of LB923, and falls under Palmer's duties. Schools will implement the now-mandatory one-hour training for nurses,

teachers, counselors, school psychologists, administrators, school social workers and other appropriate staff at the start of the 2015-16 school year.

The five-year plan is an evidence-based program and is now available to school districts and educators.

"The training is finished and ready for dissemination. Schools should have plenty of time to plan and implement the program," she said.

Palmer has turned her focus to development of the safety and security standards for the state's 245 school districts.

"Most schools have already created safety plans," she said. "There may be modifications needed, not overhauls."

As directed by LB923, she will:

- Establish preparedness standards that will ensure, as dictated in LB923, that every school conduct at least two tornado drills each school year.

- Set a "return to learn" plan for students who have sustained concussions.

NSEA members with questions about the security and safety standards, the suicide prevention framework, or similar issues, can reach Palmer at:

jolene.palmer@nebraska.gov

Ag College Offers Food Prize Contest

Students Can Earn Prize, Meet Nobel Laureates

Educators can help students gain knowledge and develop skills to learn about feeding a growing world population through the World Food Prize Nebraska Youth Institute essay program. Students can earn a \$500 University of Nebraska–Lincoln College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) scholarship.

Students choose topics from 20 factors and more than 100 countries, with papers due June 1 or before. The essays can earn students a place as a participant in Lincoln at the Sept. 11 meeting, held in collaboration with the World Food Prize and the Malaika Foundation.

Six Nebraska students are selected to attend the World Food Prize Global Youth Institute in Des Moines Oct. 15-17, along with a mentor or another adult. There, students will hear and interact with Nobel and World Food Prize laureates, as well as the world's foremost thinkers and leaders in agriculture and food security. Students who attend the Des Moines event may apply for an internship or fellowship.

For details, call Laura Snell at 402-472-9782 or email her at:

WFPNYI@unl.edu

Free Booklet on Teen Rights, Responsibilities

The Nebraska State Bar Foundation has updated its popular *Reaching the Age of Majority* booklet. It is available to educators, free of charge, as an eBook, PDF or in printed form.

The booklet is designed to educate youth about the rights and responsibilities that come with adulthood and is the volunteer work of legal professionals. Topics include alcohol; contracts; crime victims; insurance; Internet safety; landlord tenant laws; parties; sex crime; tax responsibilities; and weapons, guns, and fireworks; in addition to 25 other topics.

A gift from Virginia Schmid, widow of past Foundation President Marvin Schmid, made the updating and printing possible. To obtain a copy, go to:

nebarfnd.org/age-of-majority

You may also request a classroom presentation by a lawyer or judge on selected topics contained in the booklet.



The Columbus Contingent:

These members from Columbus attended an NEA-sponsored event for young educators held in Norfolk on Feb. 17. From left are Lori Focher, Christine Morse, Chelsea Augustine, Lindsey Rosno and Sherry Thompson.

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A Short Q&A on AQuESTT

By Dr. Matt Blomstedt,
Nebraska Commissioner of Education

The State Board of Education in February took a big step toward initiating a new state quality education and accountability system for Nebraska schools. AQuESTT — Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow — was adopted by the Board and embedded in Rule 10, which spells out requirements and guidance for public schools.

While you will see the results of the AQuESTT classification system next fall, the work is ongoing as the State Board of Education and Nebraska Department of Education staff, in partnership with state education policy makers work to fully develop AQuESTT to further strengthen our schools and the focus on higher learning for Every Student Every Day.

Educating Every Student Every Day is a team effort with teachers and students holding the key to success.

Here are answers to frequently asked questions about AQuESTT.

Q. Why is Nebraska building a new state accountability system?

A. State law mandates a new school accountability system. AQuESTT will replace the Nebraska Performance Accountability System, NePAS, which has ranked school districts by student scale scores on state tests in recent years.

Q. How is AQuESTT different than NePAS?

A. AQuESTT does more than the minimum required by state law on accountability. It also spells out Six Tenets for school improvement, providing Rule 10 guidance for schools.

As for accountability, beginning this fall, schools will be classified — not ranked — in one of four areas: Excellent, Great, Good, Needs Improvement. These classifications will be based on student NeSA test status scores in reading, math,

science and writing as well as student participation, growth, improvement and graduation rates. State law requires NDE to: 1) classify schools and districts based on those indicators; and 2) designate three schools in most need of assistance. NDE will work with those three schools to create a progress plan.

Q. How does AQuESTT guide school improvement?

A. AQuESTT identifies Six Tenets to guide continuous school improvement. Those tenets have been embedded in the Rule 10 draft submitted to the Attorney General for approval. The Six Tenets are guidance — not requirements — for schools. The tenets integrate accountability, assessment, accreditation, career education and data use into an aligned system of continuous school improvement to provide support that is vital for student success and critical to closing persistent achievement gaps. AQuESTT's Six Tenets create a roadmap to school improvement. Learn more at:

<http://bit.ly/6TenetsAQuESTT>

Q. Has federal policy influenced AQuESTT?

A. Federal policy, as well as state legislation, continues to influence state policy. AQuESTT, however, goes beyond state minimums. Federal policy remains unclear as Congress appears ready to reauthorize ESEA. Nebraska education policy makers recently signed and presented to our Congressional delegates a position statement reaffirming the state's education policy and suggesting how ESEA changes could benefit Nebraska and other students. Learn more at:

<http://bit.ly/ESEAPosition>

Q. If ESEA is reauthorized, could AQuESTT change?

A. While federal policy changes may affect state education policy in unknown ways, the State Board of Education, the NDE and our policy partners believe AQuESTT is right for Nebraska.

To view proposed revisions to Rule 10, go to:

<http://bit.ly/Rule10Draft>



Blomstedt

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NSEA's For all it's Worth series continues with the delivery of quick and easy details about Association membership, its benefits and value.

Every month of the 2014-15 school year, the For all it's Worth series provides easy-to-access information about your NSEA membership. Throughout the school year, you will receive monthly membership editions via email, highlighting three key areas: Membership Benefits, Working Conditions and Action & Advocacy.

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Every change made in public education is policy driven. From increasing school funding and ensuring appropriate class size, to legislation to improve and protect your job, decisions made from the statehouse to Capitol Hill affect students, parents, teachers and education support professionals.

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- Provides essential representation in the legislature;
- Protects and promotes legislation and programs that benefit children, teachers, education support professionals and public schools;
- Monitors the legislature, as well as boards, agencies and committees whose work affects public education and the education profession; and
- Encourages active participation by members to elect candidates who are committed to public education.

Watch for news and updates from the For all it's Worth series in your email in-box, on Facebook and online at:

nsea.org



Rave Reviews For Delegate Assembly

Evaluations Give Event High Marks; DA Forecast: Stormy!

Are there storm clouds ahead for Nebraska educators? You bet there are – especially considering what is happening in the Legislature!

Legislation to open Nebraska to corporate schools has been introduced via LB616 (see page 7). Also on the Legislature's docket is a bill to silence your voice as an association member: LB288 would seek to dismantle your local and state associations.

Facing those stormy threats to public school education and the work of your association, it makes sense that NSEA's 2015 Delegate Assembly will feature a real storm chaser in Reed Timmer, as well as a man in the know about association work at the national level, NEA Executive Committee member Earl Wiman.

Both will keynote the Delegate Assembly set for Lincoln's Embassy Suites on April 24-25, fitting for an annual meeting with a theme of 'A Storm of Action.' The theme signifies the power your association generates as a collective force when members band together.

This year's Delegate Assembly will also mark two important anniversaries. The NSEA-Retired affiliate is at 30 years, and the NSEA Children's Fund will observe 20 years with a fundraiser (see related story).

'As Long as I am a Member...'

In between and around those addresses, NSEA members will conduct Association business. Amendments to Bylaws will be ready for debate, and Resolutions may receive updates.

Dues for the 2015-16 Association year will also be set.



Timmer



Wiman

A 20/20 Vision For the Children's Fund Use is Far Outpacing Donations to Fund

For 20 years, the NSEA Children's Fund has upheld the notion that no child's education should suffer because of need.

No child should come to school unable to see the front of the classroom because his or her family cannot afford eyeglasses. No child should be distracted by hunger pangs.

Now, after 20 years, the Children's Fund is lacking. Donations have dipped at the same time the need has intensified. The fund balance on Sept.

I was \$76,080. By Dec. 31, the balance had fallen to \$59,494.

Children's Fund expenses in the first four months of the Association year surpassed \$29,400. Donations during the same period were at \$12,800.

As the fund marks 20 years, NSEA district presidents are leading a campaign called *20/20 Vision for the Children's Fund*. The goal is to raise \$10,000 by the time the gavel comes down at the end of the 2015 NSEA Delegate Assembly on April 25.

The goal is for each local association to raise 20 cents per member – that's right: just 20 cents per member – and for each 2015 Delegate Assembly delegate to raise \$20. Potential delegates are urged to raise money, rather than simply write a check.

There are no limits on how local associations can raise funds; pass the hat, have a raffle or hold a Blue Jeans Day. The only request is that fundraising be complete and checks from local associations arrive at NSEA no later than Wednesday, April 22.

Delegates can deliver any cash they raise at Delegate Assembly.

Questions? Contact Sally Bodtke at NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 or at

sally.bodtke@nsea.org



NSEA President Nancy Fulton said action of delegates in 2015 will reverberate through public education in Nebraska for years.

"We face some serious threats, as an association," said Fulton. "Public education in Nebraska, as well, is in need of a champion. Members need to be engaged on these issues, and Delegate Assembly is a great place to start that engagement."

Indeed, reviews from past Assemblies have been strong and positive. Said one participant who completed the anonymous evaluation process following the 2014 event: "This is my third year of teaching, and my third Delegate Assembly. It is my intention to continue attending DA as long as I am a member, assuming I'm given the honor."

Into the Storm

Wiman was elected to the NEA Executive Committee for a second term in July. While serving on the Executive Committee, he has helped lead NEA's signature initiative to transform schools: "Leading the Professions."

He is a past president and vice president of the Tennessee Education Association, and served two terms as president of the Jackson-Madison County Education Association.

He taught in Tennessee public schools for 35 years as a kindergarten teacher, principal and librarian.

Timmer starred in the Discovery Channel's Storm Chasers program, often driving the armored Dominator – cameras rolling – into the core of an oncoming tornado.

He has a passion for learning and for teaching – he can often be found advocating for education about the dangers of extreme weather and disasters. He is a regular in university lecture halls and civic auditoriums.

This will be NSEA's 154th Delegate Assembly. All members in good standing are eligible to seek delegate status. To do so, talk to your local association president or your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047. NSEA covers the cost of a shared hotel room for each delegate, Saturday breakfast, a noon box lunch and mileage.

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Glenn

NEA Health Information Network

The NEA Health Information Network's mission is to improve the health and safety of the school community by sharing information that empowers school professionals and has a positive effect on the lives of students. The HIN offers programs like:

- the Breakfast in the Classroom Toolkit, developed to educate teachers and others about the impact of hunger on learning;

- the Red Book, which addresses how to manage blood on the job;

- Health Literacy in the 21st Century, a dialogue about what kind of K-12 educational infrastructure will be needed to prepare current and future students to participate in the 21st century's health and health care systems.

Learn more at the 'Professional' tab on the NEAMB website at:

neamb.com

School Library Journal

The School Library Journal is the largest, most authoritative professional review resource, with more than 300 teachers, librarians, curriculum director reviewers of K-12 classroom library content, including books, audio, video and more. The NEA member subscription is \$72 – a 47.5 percent discount! Look for details at:

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David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative

NEAMB Resources Enhance Your Financial Well-Being

It Isn't Too Late to Make 2015 a Financial Success

NEA Member Benefits wants to help you kick off 2015 with members-only resources for improving your personal and financial health, advancing your career and getting all the educator tax deductions you deserve.

Visit the NEA Member Benefits website to get useful tips and advice on:



- **Financial Resources:** Tips to reduce your monthly bills, the secret to reducing debt painlessly, 7 ways to save more this year, top financial resolutions of 2015, and more.

- **Health and Wellness Resources:** Eight resolutions you'll actually keep, one smart trick to staying healthy this

winter, how to save your voice in the classroom, boost your immunity with these brown bag lunches, and more.

- **Professional Resources:** Recertification speed bumps you should know about, free money for continuing education, travel grants, 7 habits of a healthy educator, and more.

- **Tax Resources:** 2014 educator tax deductions you should claim, the latest ID theft scams you need to know about, 4 tax return red flags that could get you audited, how to get your taxes done for free, and more.

Check all the resources at:

www.neamb.com/2015

Take Advantage of Low Rates with NEA Home Financing Program

Now Might Be the Right Time to Purchase

The NEA Home Financing Program, through Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, provides competitive rates and offers a wide range of home financing options, including loans for primary residences, investment, and vacation or second homes. Plus, the program comes with the full support and advocacy of your Association!

NEA members and their families are eligible to participate and use these NEA Home Financing Program features:

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- Choice of low down payment op-

tions for qualified borrowers;

- **NEA Member Bonus:** Receive a \$500 award card through My Mortgage Gift program when you close your purchase or refinance a loan with Wells Fargo Home Mortgage (also available to families of NEA members).

Don't miss this great opportunity!

Join the thousands of your NEA colleagues who already participate in the NEA Home Financing Program by contacting a home mortgage consultant. Call 1-866-327-6385 toll-free or visit:

www.neamb.com/hfp

Dollar Rent A Car Joins the NEAMB 'Fleet'

The NEA Car Rental Program has grown its "fleet" by adding Dollar Rent A Car, offering service at airports and local offices around the globe.

NEA members and their families may enjoy an extra 5 percent savings off already low prices when reserving online through the NEAMB website.

A benefit includes joining Dollar's EXPRESS Rental Program for free:

- **Shorter lines:** Members have a designated line and counter area for preferential service.

- **Free days:** Dollar EXPRESS Rewards is optional and rewards you with a free day in place of frequent flyer miles.

To learn more, or to make a reservation, please click on the "Travel" tab, and then "Car Rental" at:

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* National Savings Average APYs are based on rates of top 50 U.S. banks (ranked by total deposits) provided by Informa Research Services, Inc as of 1/6/2015.

1. Annual Percentage Yield (APY) is valid as of 1/6/2015. This offer applies to personal accounts only. Fees could reduce the earnings on the account. Rates may change at any time without prior notice, before or after the account is opened. Minimum opening deposit of \$500.

2. To qualify for the \$20 bonus offer, the applicant must: (i) be an Eligible NEA Member (an individual who is an NEA member as of the account application date, or any of the following individuals who is related to such an NEA member as of the account application date: parent, spouse, domestic partner, son, daughter, parent of the spouse/domestic partner), and (ii) open either an NEA CD or NEA Money Market Account through Discover Bank with an initial minimum deposit of \$2,500 or an NEA Online Savings Account through Discover Bank with an initial minimum deposit of \$500. NEA affiliation subject to verification. Offer limited to one per Eligible NEA Member, per product, per calendar year. NEA IRA CDs are not eligible for this offer. Bonus will be awarded via account credit within 60 days following the end of the month in which the account is funded and will be reported on IRS Form 1099-INT. Account must be opened at time of account credit. Offer may be withdrawn or modified at any time without notice.

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Tell Congress: Correct NCLB

Congress Inching Toward 'No Child' Reauthorization

Several years ago, NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen said there is an idea that the teachers of this nation can bring every student in America to a standard of proficiency by the year 2014.

"It is a great goal. It is a noble vision," he said.

"It is not possible."

Christiansen said that teachers believe that "all kids can learn," but that something is missing from the end of that sentence. "All kids can learn, but not at the same rate, and not at the same level.

"Somebody," he said, "forgot to tell that to Congress when it passed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and signaled the greatest challenge to the continued success – and existence – of public education in the history of the United States."

Now is the opportunity to correct the error that was NCLB, otherwise known as the Elementary and Second-

ary Education Act. Congress is in the beginning throes of NCLB reauthorization, and the National Education Association has launched an ESEA "Get it Right" campaign aimed at telling congress about the ills caused by the passage of NCLB.

Standardized testing "...shaves 51 days off the school year, it's almost a third of the year."

— **Jennie Beltrami,**
Washington teacher
to a Congressional Subcommittee

"Let that sink in for a minute...17 federally-mandated tests," wrote Eskelsen-Garcia. "And that's on TOP of all the other state and local

assessments that are being administered."

Washington state educator Jennie Beltrami told a congressional committee last month that standardized testing in her school district "shaves 51 days off the school year, it's almost a third of the year."

The NEA campaign urges members in every building, every discipline and every state to email congressional representatives to tell their stories about the problems caused by NCLB, the overly-burdensome testing that has resulted, and, if possible, suggested solutions. Learn more at:

www.getESEARight.com

Pop Quiz!

Further, in a recent e-mail to members, NEA President Lily Eskelsen-Garcia noted that in 2001, before No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was passed, there were six federally-mandated tests per student.

"Guess how many there are now?" she asked, allowing readers to select from these options:

- 6
- 8
- 10
- 17

The answer: 17.

Free Resources Available for Aiding Stutterers

"One in every one hundred people stutters," said Jane Fraser, president of the Stuttering Foundation. "But as many as two or three younger children in each classroom may struggle with this complex disorder.

"We know that teachers have a wonderfully positive influence on our children and their classmates, and we are thankful for the opportunity to provide the tools that prepare them with best practices and tips for working with and advocating for the child who stutters."

Free tools for teachers available from the Stuttering Foundation include:

- 8 Tips for Teachers: Answers to urgent questions teachers may have.
- Famous People Who Stutter: A mini-poster to print out.
- Dear Teacher: A personal letter.




All of these resources can be found at:

www.StutteringHelp.org/school

POWER UP YOUR CLASSROOM

NPPD's energy educators bring energy to life in the classroom. Plug into their resources — designed to help teachers meet many science standards.

For more information, visit nppd.com/energy-education



Jennifer Swerczek
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Nebraska Public Power District

The 30th Anniversary Begins!

Membership Balloons in NSEA-Retired Since '85

On Sept. 14, 1985, 10 dedicated Nebraska educators signed the first charter for NSEA-Retired, with the mission of advancing quality education in Nebraska and protecting retirement benefits for all retired school employees.

Now, 30 years later, membership is at more than 5,400 retirees. Members will celebrate this milestone at each of NSEA-Retired's sponsored events during 2015.

Part of the celebration will be a push for lifetime membership in the retired organizations for active NSEA members. Current lifetime dues for NEA-Retired/NSEA-Retired are \$450 (local retired dues amounts vary and can increase that amount by \$100). We learned last summer that there will likely be an increase in the lifetime dues amounts in 2016 or 2017. Current active NSEA members, as well as annual members for NSEA-Retired, can beat the dues increase by going to our web page, www.nsea.org/retired, clicking on the "Join Now" tab on the left and completing the application online. Lifetime dues can be spread over five months (at \$90 per month) to make the payment of life dues more affordable.

Elections Ballots Due in March

Ballots for members of NSEA-Retired will be mailed in late February or early March. They must be mailed back in the postage paid envelopes before the March deadline indicated on each ballot. Be sure to check the list of nominees and their bios at www.nsea.org/retired. Doing so will help you make an informed decision on your vote for:

- NSEA-Retired Board District Directors (Metro);
- Delegate Assembly in Lincoln (17 delegates total); and
- Representative Assembly in Orlando (5 delegates total).

Intergenerational Mentoring

To continue this very successful project, the team needs retired teachers who want to continue their contributions to public education.

The 2015 Intergenerational Mentoring Program is March 20-21 at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln. The program



At the Capitol: Retired Omaha teachers Doreen Jankovich, left, and Dave Richardson, right, talked to their representative, Omaha Sen. Sara Howard, during the NSEA-Retired Lobby Day in February. Nearly 50 retired members braved snow and cold to make the trip to the State Capitol.

Retired Members Lobby Senators

NSEA Director of Government Relations Jason Hayes shared information on specific legislation with those that attended the annual Lobby Day in Lincoln on February 3. Members were briefed in preparation for visits with state senators that morning. Members also had the opportunity to sit in on a morning session in the legislative chamber. After lunch, Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley, this year's Speaker of the Legislature, addressed the members with his outlook on the 2015 Session.

There are several ways to keep informed and also get involved in lobbying or testifying during a particular hearing. The link to legislative action for NSEA Retired is:

www.nsea.org/nsea-retired-legislative-action-center

From this website you can find links to begin lobbying, and following the bills being discussed in the Legislature. The Unicameral Update is a free publication during the legislative session. For print subscriptions, call 402-471-2788 or email:

uio@leg.ne.gov

kicks off at 1 p.m. Friday and closes at 1 p.m. Saturday. Participants must attend both days. Meals are provided, and a housing and gas stipend is available, based on location. To apply, go to:

bit.ly/IGMentor

For details, call Duane Obermier at 1-800-742-0047, or email him at:

duane.obermier@nsea.org

Spring Conference Ahead!

The annual NSEA-Retired Spring Conference will return this year to the St. Benedict Center, 1126 Road I, about five miles north of Schuyler.

Mark your calendar for the event, which is on Thursday, April 23. Registration opens at 8:30 a.m. and the con-

ference will conclude at 3:30 p.m.

The conference will feature a keynote speaker, a Spotlight on Nebraska, and breakout sessions on estate and financial planning, health insurance after retirement, travel in state parks, publishing a book, olive oil tasting and more.

There is no cost for members; guests pay \$10 each. A full agenda will be available later in March. Online registration begins after March 20 at:

www.nsea.org/retired

Watch for details in the April issue of *The Voice*, or call or e-mail Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

rebecca.smith@nsea.org

— Renae Kelly, Editor
renaekelly@gmail.com

Contemplating Retirement? Consider Attending an NPERS Seminar

NPERS Seminars Will Help You Prepare

Are you planning to retire this year, or are you thinking about retirement in the next few years?

If so, you may want to attend one of the School Retirement Planning Seminars hosted by the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems office.

The Spring 2015 seminars are for those age 50 and over, and registration is required at least one week prior to the seminar of your choice.

By law, each eligible employee is allowed leave with pay to attend up to two seminars (limited to one seminar per year). Here is the schedule and location of seminars for Spring 2015:

- March 10, 11, 12: LaVista.
- March 17, 18, 19: Lincoln.
- March 24: Columbus.
- March 25: Grand Island.
- March 26: Kearney.
- April 1: LaVista.
- April 2: Lincoln.
- April 9: Norfolk.
- April 15: Valentine.

- April 16: North Platte.
- April 29, 30: Scottsbluff.
- May 6: Lincoln.
- May 7: LaVista.
- May 28: North Platte.
- June 3: Kearney.
- June 4, 10: Lincoln.
- June 11: LaVista.
- June 17: Norfolk.
- June 18: LaVista.
- June 24: Grand Island.
- June 25: Lincoln.

For details, go to the website at:
npers.ne.gov

In the News:

Luecha Details Brutal Childhood; NSEA Cited by Music Educators

A member of the **Kenesaw Education Association** has written a book about her childhood – a childhood that was anything but pleasant.

As a young child in Thailand, **Monluedee Luecha** endured a brutal childhood. She was raped on a regular basis by her stepfather beginning at age 4, and by age 12 was sold into a life of prostitution, sleeping with 40 to 70 men each 18-hour day.

She has detailed her childhood in *Child Sex Slave: A Memoir*, a self-published title available at amazon.com.

Luecha told *The Grand Island Independent* that she was at the brothel for nine months, where she also endured beatings by the owner's sons.

Once she escaped, she spent time working cutting sugar cane for a year before returning home at age 15. She said she never reconciled with her stepfather, but helped him raise his five daughters before she immigrated to the United States.

As a high school senior, she earned National Honor Society recognition. She eventually earned a bachelor's degree in biochemistry at California State-Northridge and a master's degree at the Uni-

versity of Nebraska-Kearney.

Luecha and her husband, Jeff Kritzer, live in Kearney, where he is a professor at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. Luecha is an NSEA member and teaches science at Kenesaw.

Learn more at:

monistory.com

The **Nebraska Music Educators Association** honored NSEA with the Association's Bryan R. Johnson Distinguished Service Award.

NMEA President Sam Zitek, Nebraska Wesleyan University, presented the award to NSEA President Nancy Fulton and Jay Sears, NSEA's director of Instructional Advocacy, at NMEA's annual banquet in Lincoln. Also honored were two NSEA members, **Joshua R.F. Harris, Shickley**, and **Joyce Patch, Broken Bow**.

Harris is the NMEA's Outstanding Young Music Educator for 2014. Patch was inducted into NMEA's Hall of Fame.

NSEA hosted a booth at the NMEA convention and these NSEA members won \$25 gift cards: **Peggy Lowe, Elm Creek; Rhonda Neely, Lincoln; Dave Klein, Kearney; and Tim Rischling, Westside**.

Niel L. Tubbs

Niel L. Tubbs, 90, died Feb. 15 at Beatrice. He was a longtime member of NSEA, held several leadership roles with the Beatrice Education Association, and was quite active with the NSEA-Retired.

The valedictorian at Edgemont High School, SD, in 1942, Tubbs graduated Magna Cum Laude from Chadron State College with a degree in chemistry. He taught at Rock County High School, the Island of Guam and for most of his 38-year career at Beatrice.

Among other roles, Tubbs was a pianist, drum major, park ranger, licensed pilot and master gardener. He won numerous teaching awards and was inducted in the Beatrice Educational Foundation's Hall of Fame.

Surviving Tubbs are his wife Verna Lee, four children, seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Dan Brost

Daniel Brost, teacher, coach, negotiator and local association president, died of kidney cancer on Jan. 29.

For 34 years, Brost, 57, taught and coached at Mullen High School. His wrestling teams won five state titles in 10 years, beginning in 1985. More recently, he was activities director at McPherson County School in Tryon. He was past president of and past chief negotiator for the Hooker County Education Association.

In 1994, the Nebraska Scholastic Wrestling Coaches Association inducted Brost into the organization's Hall of Fame. As his obituary in the North Platte Telegraph said "His subject area was science, but he taught so much more than that."

Brost was a 1975 graduate of Hemingford High School and a 1978 graduate of Chadron State College. His wife, Diana, three children and their families survive.

GPS Network Offers Online Discussions, Collaborations Empowerment Possibilities are Endless

The GPS Network is a free, open-to-everyone online professional learning community created and maintained by the National Education Association to connect educators, parents, and stakeholders in public education who want to connect, collaborate, share, and learn.

Using a discussion-group format, it provides searchable data and resources that allow users to know what is important and to share what works for great public schools to support student success. Anyone can become a member, anyone can start or join a discussion group, and anyone can share resources and post questions, ideas, and experiences with other site members.

The NEA's strength is in more than 3 million members, its local affiliates, and its state affiliates, all of whom are committed to providing great public schools for every student. The Great Public Schools Network online platform is designed to empower users to do just that.

Get involved with the other great minds in education today at:

gpsnetwork.org

Speaking of Teaching

"Shortchange your education now, and you may be short of change the rest of your life."

— Anonymous

Golden Can of Cleanliness

From Doug McBride, a guidance counselor at Stewart Elementary School in Washington, Iowa.

"As part of our character education program, we have been working with students to develop responsibility and citizenship. As we teach our students that they are part of our school community, we also teach them that they have a responsibility to their fellow building citizens.

"We have developed a Golden Can (a small trashcan painted gold) that is presented to a classroom, individual or



group to acknowledge their effort in taking responsibility toward the care and cleaning of their classroom and area.

"Sometimes there might be a treat, like a small sucker or some stickers, in the can. Sometimes it's just the honor of being announced on the intercom that motivates the students. But whatever the motivation, it has made a big difference in the appearance of our building. Our students are taking responsibility for the care of their building and learning valuable lessons about citizenship while doing it."

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

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



Found it! Part of the excitement of NSEA's summer Leadership Institute is a scavenger hunt at the State Capitol, with participants tasked with finding their state senator's office, among other items. Omaha Education Association member Craig Wiles, left, and Gordon-Rushville Education Association's Shannon Shuck tracked down the office of Shuck's representative, Sen. Al Davis of Hyannis, last summer.

Leadership Institute is geared toward members who are beginning leadership roles, or thinking about doing so. This year's event is set for June 8-11 at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln. Most expenses are paid. Watch the April edition of *The Voice* for details, or call your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047 to register. Space is limited.