

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association

2024

BEYOND THE PANIC BUTTON

**Teacher Triumphs
in Classroom Safety
Accommodations**

- Celebrate American Education Week

- Ballot Language: REPEAL LB1402

- Conversations on Race and Belonging



Nebraska State Education Association
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Executive Director	Trish Guinan
Assoc. Exec. Director	Isau Metes
Dir. of Public Affairs, Communications	Karen Kilgarin
Asst. Dir. of Visual Communications	Kristi Capek
Multimedia Communications Specialist	Kelsey Foley

NSEA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	Tim Royers, Millard tim.royers@nsea.org
Vice President	Paul Schulte, Millard paul.schulte@nsea.org
Sec./Treas.	Renae Noble, Chadron nobleldr635@gmail.com
NEA Director	Edward Ventura, Jr., Omaha venturaomaha@gmail.com

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AMERICAN EDUCATION WEEK

November 18-22

#AEW2024



American Education Week (AEW) annually celebrates the achievements of public schools in America and honors the work of people making a difference in education. This year, the festivities will take place Nov. 18-22.

Each day of the week has its own theme, during which we celebrate our public school community.

Festivities honor the team of people who work in our public schools, everyone from bus drivers and classroom teachers to cafeteria workers and administrative staff, plus countless others. Schools and communities are invited to celebrate and thank school staff in fun ways throughout the week.

Monday: Kick-off Day

Celebrate the start of the week by familiarizing students with the theme, activities, and purpose of the event.

Tuesday: Family Day

Celebrate by inviting parents to actively experience how a school day goes for their students.

Wednesday: Education Support Professionals Day

Education Support Professionals Day is a day to celebrate a school's support staff.

Thursday: Educator for a Day

Celebrate by inviting community leaders to work as an employee in the school, performing all the duties of a teacher for a full day.

Friday: Substitute Educators Day

Friday celebrates people who are there to help educators when there is a sudden emergency or temporary leave.

Would You Like to Write for The Voice?

Would you like to write an item for *The Voice*? Perhaps an opinion column or an article on what is working in your classroom? Submissions can be classroom-related, humorous, inspiring or otherwise teaching related. Submit your questions about the process, and your topics to us at:

thevoice@nsea.org

On the Cover: SCATA Education Association member Jodie Morgenson works in one of the toughest climates in education. With support from NSEA and her colleagues, she's working toward safer learning environment. See the story and photos, pages 7-8.

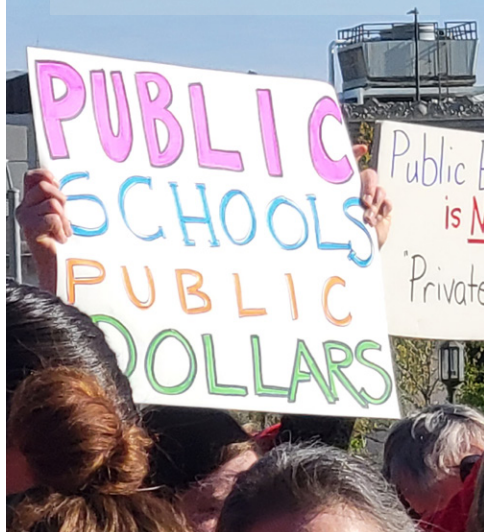


PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

TIM ROYERS

You Made the Difference

“Whether you helped gather signatures, wrote postcards, joined a rally, or had an all-important conversation with a neighbor to explain why repealing this voucher scheme matters—you truly made a difference.”



As we head into the final days before the November 5th General Election, I want to thank all our members who have given so much over the last two years in our fight to get the issue of publicly funded private school vouchers – the referendum to Repeal LB1402 – on the ballot. It took the collective efforts of thousands of us, working in a myriad of ways all across the state, to ensure the voice of Nebraska voters would be heard on this critical issue. Whether you helped gather signatures, wrote postcards, joined a rally, or had an all-important conversation with a neighbor to explain why repealing this voucher scheme matters—you truly made a difference.

Thank You

While we await a final decision on private school vouchers from Nebraskans on election day, it's important to take a moment to recognize what a significant achievement it is to get this issue on the ballot in the first place. It can be easy to lose sight of our success, especially with how much negative political messaging there is surrounding the election right now. No matter the outcome, NSEA members and our allies have demonstrated our unwavering commitment to ensure our public schools are strong to serve children and our communities. So, thank you—and be sure to take a moment to celebrate the success we've achieved together.

Moving Forward

Our work doesn't end after the polls close on Nov. 5. In fact, it's just beginning. It's essential that we continue building on the momentum we've gained and focus on the

pressing issues facing public schools and our members.

Thank you to the thousands of active PK-12 members who answered NSEA's survey to help us identify our policy priorities for the coming Legislative session. Rather than fighting against harmful legislation, I want to shift NSEA's efforts into crafting proactive, thoughtful legislation that will provide more resources for public schools, support teacher retention, strengthen the teaching profession, and ultimately help you better meet the needs of all students.

Our Aspiring Ed, Higher Ed, and Retired members will be lending their voice to this effort soon (watch for our survey in your inbox!). Our goal is to set a different tone in the coming year: one where positive legislation that will meaningfully improve your lives is prioritized by our lawmakers.

Your Voice

Your perspectives and stories will help us in our efforts to educate lawmakers on how our state can make education at all levels a desirable profession. NSEA is at its best when members feel they have the opportunity to lend their voices and actions to efforts in support of their students, communities and the profession. I hope you will continue to feel that you have ongoing opportunities to remain involved long after the election is done.

Thanksgiving is just a few weeks away. I know that we, as Nebraskans, have much to be thankful for. I count among my many blessings my family, my profession, and you, my NSEA colleagues. I wish you and your loved ones a very Happy Thanksgiving.

Vote to **REPEAL** LB1402



The lead up to the November General Election has been raging for months, marked by intense campaigning, heightened political rhetoric and a barrage of advertising by mail, online and on TV. For Nebraskans opposed to private school voucher schemes, the fight has extended over two years.

Since 2023, more than 200,000 Nebraskans have signed a petition to repeal voucher schemes that politicians try to dress up as “scholarships” for low-income kids. A few politicians, intent on imposing this voucher scheme on taxpayers, actively fought against their own constituents to pass “an end-run” around the successful petition with LB1402. Since the passage of LB1402’s private school voucher scheme, several public school districts have lost millions in state funding. Nebraska taxpayers cannot afford to send \$100 million to private schools over the next decade.

Not in Nebraska

Nebraskans are overwhelmingly opposed to voucher schemes and have voted to reject public funds for private schools at the ballot box on three separate occasions. This year, Nebraskans will vote on Measure 435, a referendum which seeks to repeal LB1402.

“LB1402 will lead to an increase in property taxes,” said Support Our Schools Nebraska President Jenni Benson. “As state funding is diverted from public schools, local communities will be forced to increase property taxes to make up for that lost funding.”

In the final weeks before election day, Benson and other public school supporters traveled to testify during public hearings

in each of Nebraska’s three congressional districts.

“So, two years, two successful petition drives, and 200,000+ signatures later it has been made clear that Nebraskans will not be denied their voice,” Benson testified. “Facts matter. In every state that has enacted similar voucher schemes, the cost to taxpayers has skyrocketed.”

Vote to Repeal

The millions of public funds spent to pay for private schools through LB1402 would otherwise be available to support local public schools, which serve 90% of children in the state. Nebraska cannot afford to pay for two school systems. A vote to Repeal LB1402 in the November General Election will keep public funds for public schools.



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Ballot Language To Look For:

REFERENDUM ORDERED BY PETITION OF THE PEOPLE

Referendum Measure 435

A vote to "RETAIN" will keep in effect Section 1 of Legislative Bill 1402 enacted in 2024 by the Nebraska Legislature. Section 1 of Legislative Bill 1402 provides for \$10 million annually to fund education scholarships to pay all or part of the cost to educate eligible students attending nongovernmental, privately operated elementary and secondary schools in Nebraska.

A vote to "REPEAL" will eliminate the funding and scholarship provisions in Section 1 of Legislative Bill 1402.

Section 1 of Legislative Bill 1402, enacted by the Nebraska Legislature in 2024, provides for \$10 million annually to fund education scholarships to pay all or part of the cost to educate eligible students attending nongovernmental, privately operated elementary and secondary schools in Nebraska.

Shall Section 1 of Legislative Bill 1402 be repealed?

☐ Retain

☒ Repeal

DEAR VOTER,

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Aurora-area educators encourage repeal vote

Dear Editor:

Vote to repeal LB 1402 Referendum 435, the private education scholarship bill, in the general election. You may have seen recent advertisements that say teachers oppose this law because they are protecting their jobs. That is very disingenuous. Most people give educators more credit. They teach because they care a great deal about students and learning. Teachers care enough to dedicate their careers to teaching children. We are retired educators who oppose LB 1402 because it is wrong for Nebraska for a host of reasons.

LB 1402 will result in unnecessary state spending. This law obligates \$100 million taxpayer dollars for private school tuition in the coming years, and that number will grow. In other states that have already passed similar laws, the spending is overwhelming their state budgets without irrefutably better academic results.

Do some research—Arizona in particular, but also other states are now underfunding public education, infrastructure, and other areas in order to keep up with their state's private school funding commitments. We urge you to vote to repeal LB 1402.

(As printed in the Aurora News Register)

Speaking of Arizona...



School Vouchers Were Supposed to Save Taxpayer Money. Instead They Blew a Massive Hole in Arizona's Budget

July 16, 2024 - ProPublica, Pro Publica Inc.

Arizona keeps paying for private school, at the expense of everything else

June 13, 2024 - AZ Central, part of the USA TODAY Network

**Universal ESA vouchers:
Arizona's \$1 billion failed experiment**

Aug. 16, 2023 - AZ MIRROR, CC Creative Commons

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SCATA Education Association member Jodie Morgenson works in one of the toughest climates in education. With support of her association she's working toward a safer learning environment for staff and student at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) in Lincoln.

Beyond the Panic Button: Teacher Triumphs in Classroom Safety Accommodations

In her 25 years of teaching, Jodie Morgenson says working with students at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) in Lincoln has been the most rewarding. The secure facility offers intensive behavioral management treatment for students with high acuity behavioral needs.

"This is my favorite job *ever*," Morgenson said. "I spent 20 years in the classroom before coming to YRTC. I didn't always see the positive influence I had on my other students in the ways I can see in my students at the YRTC. They make extraordinary gains in a short amount of time. I get to help my students see that school is not a bad place and that learning is worthwhile."

As with any secure facility, there are protocols in place to ensure the safety of students and staff. For example, the YRTC classroom is locked from the outside, teachers at the facility don't carry keys for the classroom door, they are not allowed to carry personal cell phones, and they are not equipped with radios. Behavior staff inside the classroom are equipped with keys and a radio. The classroom also has a

panic button in case of an emergency. Morgenson and other educators in the facility are trained in a system of de-escalation called, "Handle with Care" but are instructed that only as a last resort are they to physically intervene in the event of an altercation.

"In our facility, no teacher has ever had to physically intervene because we have behavior staff," she explained.

Worst-Case Scenario

Last year, Morgenson was in her classroom when two students began fighting with a behavioral staff member. Morgenson and a staff trainee were the only other adults in the room at the time. The staff member who was being attacked was the only one with the keys to get out of the classroom or a radio.

"I couldn't get to the panic button because it was across the room from where the attack took place

and classroom furniture was in the way," Morgenson recalled. "I was attempting to verbally de-escalate and assess whether or not I could physically intervene. We had no way to call for help, and no way to leave the classroom to get help. I felt powerless because both boys were bigger and stronger than me."

Luckily the behavioral staff member had radioed for additional support before being attacked but he had not signaled for immediate help, or a "level one" response. It took a while for help to arrive.

"Of course, if you're watching a man get beat up in a classroom, it feels like an eternity. I can't imagine what it felt like for him."

After additional staff intervened to break up the fight and the staff member who was attacked sought medical attention, Morgenson went back to teaching.

"I went and taught class for the

"We had no way to call for help. I felt powerless."

— Jodie Morgenson
SCATA Education Association



Morgenson is a member of the State Code Agencies Teachers Association working with students undergoing behavioral management treatment.

rest of the day in the very room where this attack happened," she said.

In the days and weeks that followed, Morgenson says she felt an unsettling sense of alarm while teaching.

"Something broke in me at that point. I didn't feel safe going back into that room where I couldn't get out if I needed to without the assistance of another person," she said. "My brain kept going to 'What if this happens again?' Then there were times when I was left in my classroom with staff who didn't carry radios."

Morgenson says many of her colleagues reached out to check on her after the incident while others tried to comfort her by telling her that witnessing this kind of violence would eventually become less shocking over time.

"I know some people handle trauma differently. I had people saying things like, 'Well, you know where you work and this is just one of those things we have to deal with here,' and I just felt like, 'I don't want to become desensitized to something like that. It should have upset me. It should upset anyone who witnesses it.'"

YRTC students are already undergoing treatment to address their behavioral, mental health, and substance abuse needs. Therapists use an integrated care model to address co-occurring issues. With that in mind, Morgenson's primary concern was the need for help and the inability to communicate from inside a locked

classroom. She took her concerns to her principal and superintendent.

Small but Mighty

Morgenson is a member of the State Code Agencies Teachers Association (SCATA). Members in this small local are also state employees working under the Department of Health and Human Services. This means that not only are members beholden to a principal and a superintendent, they are also subject to state rules and regulations as well as facility rules overseen by Lancaster County.

"I was being told, 'we hear you, but you can't have a radio. We can't give you a key and here's why.' And we don't know what to do," said Morgenson. "They said 'let us think about it and we'll get back to you.'"

Morgenson didn't just wait. She contacted her NSEA Organizational Specialist Mandy Faripour and began keeping a detailed record of her requests for safety accommodations and the response from supervisors.

"If I could give advice to any member going through something similar, it would be to keep receipts," said Morgenson. "If something feels off, start putting it in writing."

SCATA decided to act as a group, sending a letter and timeline of their safety concerns to administrators. On the recommendation of Faripour, SCATA members called for a meeting.

"We had some very specific asks. If teachers can't have keys or radios, what is something we can use? We

felt that teachers needed a way to communicate that's not Webex. I'm not going to send an email saying 'HELP! Someone's getting attacked,'" Morgenson said.

Finding a solution, even with her principal and superintendent and her local association on board, was challenging. The logistics of being in a secure facility means that Morgenson doesn't have one set classroom, she travels with a cart to several areas of the building to teach.

"As state employees in a county building, there is an extra layer of red tape, but our members really supported each other to inch their way to improvement in one of the toughest climates in education," said Faripour. "SCATA is a small but mighty local."

Finding a Solution

SCATA members remained persistent that their concerns be met with a solution that would satisfy both the state and county regulations for the facility.

"I had to keep reminding myself that I wasn't asking too much," said Morgenson. "I was made to feel like I was being crazy and that I didn't know how to do my job. That is something I am very confident in. I know that I'm a good teacher. I know how to run a classroom, and it doesn't matter who the students are, I got this."

In the end, their perseverance paid off. Teachers would be given a facility-approved phone: a flip phone that would be able to call just one number—the Lancaster County facility control.

"It was definitely a victory. I mean, it was a compromise, and there's nothing wrong with that. I was glad that they were willing to work through it with me. I do wish that it would have been treated as more of a priority than it was but ultimately, I took the W for sure," she said.

A Priority for NSEA

Fostering school environments where educators and students feel safe and supported is a priority of the NSEA. The Association advocates for policies at the state and local level to promote mental health support, address school safety concerns, and collectively bargain to ensure that teachers have the resources, training, and working conditions they need to be successful.

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Waverly Transportation Association (WTA) President Billie Trouba (left) with WTA Lead Negotiator Steve Davison (right).

Bargaining Help: NSEA Offers Expert Guidance to Resolve Bargaining Table Confusion

Waverly Transportation Association (WTA) member Steve Davison is usually up by 4 a.m. to prepare for his full-time job. He works at that job until 3 p.m. and by 3:30 p.m. he's already clocked in at the Waverly Student Transportation building for a pre-trip check of his bus.

A Good Gig

"I have a small route that I'm delegated to every day, but sometimes they combine that route with another route, if need be, because I'm also a sub for every route," Davison said.

Davison's full-time job schedule is nine days on, then five days off. During his days off, he will sometimes pick up morning shifts to help get Waverly Public Schools students to school.

"It's a good gig. I'm hoping when I retire from my current full-time job, I can drive full-time for our Waverly Public Schools," he said.

Davison is also the lead negotiator for bus drivers at WTA. He and Waverly Transportation Association President Billie Trouba have been negotiating with the school district for years to improve working conditions, compensation and

benefits for their drivers. The local association has a long history of bargaining contracts for its members.

Trouba is a 29-year veteran bus driver and played an important part in organizing drivers to form the WTA.

"I was at a school board meeting where they were approving raises for other staff, but bus drivers hadn't had a raise in three years," Trouba said. "We were invited to learn more about how NSEA could help us bargain."

Now retired NSEA Organizational Specialist Tom Martin talked with the drivers.

"I remember looking around the room and many drivers were nodding their heads as Martin spoke," said Trouba. "With his help, we organized to form the Waverly Transportation Association."

In their first attempt at negotiating a contract, school board members wouldn't recognize WTA as a bargaining unit. So, Martin took members through the process to attain permanent certification status with the Nebraska Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) and WTA won recognition as the permanent bargaining agent for its members.

Bargaining Table Confusion

In February, Davison and Trouba prepared for negotiations earlier than usual at the request of the school superintendent.

"Billie and I were cool with it. We talked to our members, set some goals for negotiations, and scheduled a date for a first round of negotiations," explained Davison.

The district and WTA traded proposals and agreed to meet again for a second round of negotiations.

"When we came back for another meeting, we were told that we couldn't legally be negotiating because they said we didn't submit the two-year recognition letter like the teachers do," said Davison. "And I said, 'We don't have to do that.' The two school district reps were pretty new to the district and they had paperwork from their attorney. At that point, I knew we needed to get NSEA involved."

NSEA Archives

Davison and Trouba contacted their NSEA Organizational Specialist Teresa Matthews.

"Because WTA has permanent certification, it can skip the formal

request process and instead collaborate directly with the district to schedule dates for the start of bargaining,” said Matthews. “NSEA has a long history of helping locals navigate CIR requirements for permanent certification in elections.”

Matthews and NSEA staff hit the NSEA archives to help track down all of the documentation from WTA’s 2002 certification vote that won CIR designation as the permanent bargaining agent. NSEA helped Davison and Trouba draft a response to the school district to clear up confusion about permanent certificated units.

“We presented the paperwork to them, and they took it back to their attorney to look over,” Davison said. “It took awhile for them to get their ducks in a row and meet us back at the table but when they did, we shook hands and moved forward.”

Membership and Bargaining

Davison and Trouba have set some long-term bargaining goals for WTA and have worked to build membership and grow their local association.

“Long-term priorities would include insurance and paid days off—especially snow days,” said Davison. “Drivers rely on a set number of workdays, and missing a day due to weather means missing income. Many of these drivers depend heavily on each paycheck, so having a few paid snow days would provide stability. Currently, if you miss a day, you don’t get paid. Working to secure snow days along with insurance benefits would make a big difference.”

It would also benefit the district. Many school districts across the state struggle to find and keep qualified school bus drivers.

NSEA helps guide local associations through the negotiations process. NSEA also maintains a file of current contracts from around the state that can be used as a resource for both language and negotiable items. If negotiations slow or threaten to stall, NSEA offers a variety of dispute-resolution options including fact-finding, mediation and petitioning the CIR.

Contact your NSEA Organizational Specialist with questions or for more information.

What is Permanent Certification Status?



Under provisions of a 2011 rewrite of the state’s collective bargaining statutes, local associations are required each year to formally request that the local school board recognize the local association as the bargaining agent for members. That recognition requires a vote of the school board.

With permanent certification, however, a local association can forego the formal request, and instead simply work with the board to set dates to commence bargaining. Statutorily, those negotiations must begin by Nov. 1 each year.

Certification elections are conducted by the Nebraska Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR). NSEA staff and attorneys work with local leaders at each site to ensure the CIR’s rigid guidelines are met, that elections are conducted fairly and properly, and that all members of the bargaining unit – including non-members – have their voice heard through the balloting.

Currently, 98 of 263 PK-12 and ESU local associations have attained permanent certification status.

Local association leaders interested in seeking permanent certification status should contact their NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.





NSEA TRACKS INTERIM STUDIES THAT COULD AFFECT PUBLIC EDUCATION

As the Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee prepares for a series of interim study hearings, NSEA wants to ensure that all members are aware of these critical opportunities to make your voices heard on issues that could impact the future of education in Nebraska. The upcoming hearings are scheduled for November 1, 7, and 8, and will cover a range of key topics related to education policy, funding, and classroom practices.

What is a Legislative Interim Study?

An interim study is a process that allows legislative committees to explore specific topics or issues between the regular legislative sessions. These studies often focus on gathering information, hearing stakeholder feedback, and developing potential legislative solutions for upcoming sessions. Interim studies provide a unique opportunity for education professionals to share their firsthand insights on the real-world impact of proposed policy changes and offer solutions informed by classroom experience.

Why have a Teacher's Voice at Interim Study Hearings?

Interim study hearings are more than just a forum for discussion—they are a chance for educators to shape the direction of future legislation. Testifying at these hearings allows teachers to advocate for policies that support student success and to inform legislators about the day-to-day realities of the classroom. By participating, NSEA

members can ensure that decisions made in the State Capitol are grounded in the real-world needs of students and educators.

Below is information on interim study hearings addressing crucial topics of concern to Nebraska educators:

Interim Study Topics for November 1, 2024

LR321 (Conrad) Interim study to determine the scope and use of student surveillance, monitoring, and tracking technology by school officials in Nebraska

LR341 (McKinney) Interim study to determine the scope and use by school districts of a ban and bar action, banning and barring individuals from school property

LR439 (McKinney) Interim study to explore whether the size of school districts has contributed to historical student underachievement within the Class V school district

LR440 (McKinney) Interim study to examine how to close the educational achievement gap in the Class V school district

Interim Study Topics for November 7, 2024

LR425 (Murman) Interim study to examine the challenges faced by families with special needs students in

Government Relations

enrolling such students as option students in other school districts under the enrollment option program

LR320 (Conrad) Interim study to examine changes to the enrollment option program to ensure students with disabilities have an increased ability to access enrollment opportunities.

LR419 (Hughes) Interim study to examine school meal programs in Nebraska

Interim Study Topics for November 8, 2024

LR385 (Linehan) Interim study to examine state standardized testing required in elementary and secondary public schools and the (AQuESTT) system used to classify schools under the Quality Education Accountability Act

LR303 (Murman) Interim study to examine the viability of adopting the Classical Learning Test as an option for meeting admissions requirements at the University of Nebraska and the Nebraska state colleges

LR378 (Murman) Interim study to examine the viability of selling land managed by the Board of Educational Lands and Funds

LR496 (Educ Cmmt) Interim study to examine issues relating to the State Department of Education.

How to Get Involved

If you have firsthand knowledge of any of the topics being covered, there are two primary ways to contribute:

Submit Written Comments Online:

Written comments can be provided on each interim study's bill page found at www.bit.ly/Neb-Legis-Calendar. These comments should be submitted at least 24 hours before the scheduled hearing to ensure delivery to committee members. This is a convenient way to share your insights if attending in person is not possible.

Testify In-Person:

Personal testimony has the power to make a significant impact. If you are interested in testifying, we encourage you to connect with our Government Relations team for guidance and support. To get started, contact Eamonn Leahy at Eamonn.leahy@nsea.org. Please note that for two interim hearings – LR385 and LR496 – only invited

testifiers, primarily representatives from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), will be permitted to speak. However, all other hearings are open to public testimony.

Stay Informed and Engaged – NSEA will continue to provide updates as more details about these interim studies become available. Your advocacy is crucial in shaping the policies that affect Nebraska students and educators. Together, we can make sure that the realities of the classroom are reflected in the decisions made by elected officials. By participating in these hearings or submitting online comments, NSEA members can play an active role in shaping the future of education in Nebraska. Let's make our voices heard!

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NEBRASKA SMART

SUCCESS MADE ACCESSIBLE THROUGH RURAL TUTORING



CHADRON STATE COLLEGE

Chadron State College invites rural students to participate in the expanded SMART tutor program

Nebraska Success Made Accessible through Rural Tutoring (SMART) is expanding its mission to provide high-quality, free tutoring services to K-12 students across rural Nebraska school districts.

The program connects students with dedicated teacher education candidates from the three Nebraska State Colleges: Chadron, Peru, and Wayne.

Program Expansion and Eligibility

- The program now serves students from all school districts affiliated with the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA), those in districts supported by Educational Service Units 1, 4, and 13, and several other select rural districts.

How the Program Works

- Tutoring services are delivered online, allowing students or parents to schedule sessions between Monday and Thursday.
- Students can either schedule an appointment or select on-demand tutoring.
- Tutors have been admitted to their college's teacher education program, passed background checks, and received comprehensive training.
- Nebraska SMART ensures students are paired with tutors who specialize in their grade level and subject area.



Learn More and Register

For more information or to register for tutoring, visit the Nebraska SMART webpage.

EHA Announces '25-26 Insurance Rates, Coverages

The Educators Health Alliance Board of Directors set rates for the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska educator health plans at its October 28 meeting.

The new rates, coverage and premium information was not available at press time but will be posted online by Nov. 1 at www.ehaplan.org.

The average annual rate increase over the past 10 years has been below 5%.

The EHA is a non-profit corporation created to procure quality, affordable health care insurance for Nebraska public education employees.

The rates set by the EHA are for the BCBSNE plan used by more than 400 public school districts and affiliates. The plan is governed by a 12-member board representing the Nebraska Association of School Boards, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and the NSEA.



Conversations on RACE & BELONGING

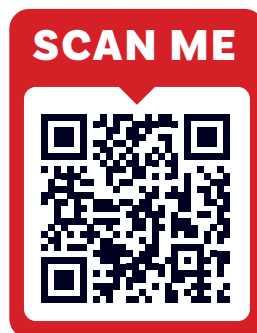
Join CORB for Post-Election, Pre-Holiday Conversations

The Conversations on Race and Belonging (CORB) model is inviting people to connect person-to-person to prepare for post-election and pre-holiday conversations with family and friends.

Here is what to expect:

- **Mark your calendar:** Attend one or all three in-person sessions on Nov. 13 from 6-8 p.m., Nov. 16 from 9-11 a.m. and Nov. 17 from 1-3 p.m.
- **What to expect:** These 2-hour sessions will center on how to bring the CORB approach into navigating politically-charged conversations with family, friends, colleagues, and students.
- **Story sharing:** A key element of the CORB approach is story-sharing (listening as well as telling). Even if you disagree with someone, facilitators will help participants “hear” and understand their story.
- **Self-awareness:** Facilitators create space for relational conversations, engaging participants in raising their self-awareness while building shared literacy and perspective on equity and belonging.

For more information, visit nsea.org/DeepDive or scan the QR code on this page.



Conversations on Race and Belonging is a network of facilitators who work to create space for relational conversations. Programs offered are designed by facilitators belonging to the network.

Nominate Outstanding Teachers for Recognition: Celebrate Excellence in Education!



Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, Education Support Professional or deserving group. Members are eligible for:

- **Early Career Educator:** To honor a teacher who has excelled in their first five years of teaching.
- **Award for Teaching Excellence:** Honors a teacher who has excelled in the classroom over a period of time.
- **Education Support Professional of the Year:** Honors an ESP who has excelled in their job. Finalists will be notified in March, with winners announced at the Assembly. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award.
- **Community Service:** Honors NSEA members or local associations involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.
- **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding internal communication.

Members can also nominate individuals or groups for these awards:

- **The Great Plains Milestone:** Honors an individual or group for promoting human and civil rights.
- **Administrator of Excellence:** Honors a public school administrator who strives every day to help students and staff be successful.
- **Friend of Education:** NSEA's highest honor is presented in recognition of an individual or organization that has made a statewide contribution to education or to Nebraska educators.
- **Outstanding Media:** Honors a newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues and promotion of public education.

Nominations may be submitted online at www.nsea.org/DA or mailed to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14 St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. All nomination materials must be received at the NSEA office no later than 5 p.m. on February 16, 2024.

Have a student teacher? Sign them up for Aspiring Ed!

A semester of student teaching is a unique time for an educator, and it's the perfect time to surround oneself with support from other new and seasoned educators.

If you have a student teacher in your classroom this year, encourage them to become a member of the NSEA-Aspiring Educators. You may even set aside some time to walk them through the process and help them understand the myriad of benefits they'll receive as a member of the Association.

Feeling especially generous? Pay their Aspiring Educators dues—just \$40 for the year!

Benefits of membership for Aspiring Educators include student loan forgiveness workshops, access to year-round professional development opportunities, big savings through the NEA Discount Marketplace, the \$1 million Educators Employment Liability insurance policy and much more.

First-year educators will also benefit from involvement in

NewGEN, NSEA's New Generation of Educators in Nebraska. The organization is comprised of early career educators in their first seven years of teaching who network and support each other through the challenges of a new teaching career.

For more information or to help a new member register, go to www.nsea.org/JoinNow, or contact the NSEA Membership Department by calling 1-800-742-0047 or emailing membership@nsea.org.

Apply now for 2025 Belz, Lynch, Krause Grants

Good teachers are always looking to improve their skill set, and the NSEA makes learning easier with an award from the Belz, Lynch, Krause Educational Grant Fund. The 2025 application deadline is Saturday, March 1.

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

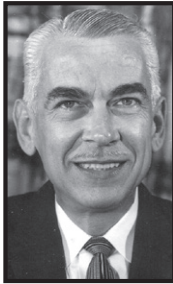
The application must include an abstract of the project (not to exceed four typed pages) including the following information:

- need;
- how the project will address that need and relate to professional growth goals;
- project description;
- timeline;
- a budget statement; and
- methods of evaluating success.

Applications must be submitted online by 11:59 p.m. CST on March



Belz



Lynch



Krause

1, 2025. Recipients will be notified in March.

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

The grants are named for John Lynch, NSEA's executive director from 1959 to 1974; Paul Belz, executive director from 1974 to 1984; and Helen Krause, NSEA president in 1966 and the first Nebraskan to serve on NEA's Executive Committee.

Further details and the application form can be found at www.nsea.org/BLK. For questions, contact Chris Garcia at 1-800-742-0047 or email Chris.Garcia@nsea.org.

Turn to the NSEA Children's Fund



Where there is a child in need, there is likely a teacher willing to help by opening his wallet or her purse.

Teachers frequently spend their own hard-earned dollars to help these children. But a teacher can't assist every child encountered during the school day, much less during the school year. That is why NSEA created the Children's Fund. Since 1994, donations to the Children's Fund have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to help children in need.

The generosity of Children's Fund donors has helped to pay for glasses, warm clothing, medical and dental needs of children; provide assistance to a family whose home and belongings were destroyed by fire; purchase a bus ticket for a child with no other means to get to school; and more.

Local associations are encouraged to brainstorm fundraising ideas; to challenge other local associations; to collect change; host a jeans day fundraiser; or consider other ways to contribute toward the fund.

There is never any red tape or lengthy delay for members wanting to use the fund to help a student. A call to Karen Hunt at the NSEA (800-742-0047) is usually all that is needed. For more information, visit nsea.org/childrensfund.

November is Diabetes Awareness Month

1 in 10 Nebraskans are living with diabetes, but healthy lifestyle choices can improve your outcomes.

Your EHA health benefits include a suite of powerful tools to manage diabetes, at no additional cost.

Get support on your journey at NebraskaBlue.com/EHAPop



Health benefits for EHA are provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.



Para-Teacher Communication ESP Members to Present at National Conference

Paraprofessionals Mary Reynolds-East and Patricia Harrahill will present at the 2025 Education Support Professionals National Conference in Louisville, Kentucky on March 21-23.

Their session will focus on improving communication between paraprofessionals and teachers, offering practical strategies for overcoming barriers that often hinder clear and effective collaboration in the education workplace.

Harrahill is a member of the Palmer Education Association and Reynolds-East is a member of the Millard Education Association.

One of the key elements of their presentation will be a group discussion dedicated to identifying the common barriers to effective communication between paraprofessionals and teachers. Participants will share real-world examples of challenging communication scenarios they have encountered in their professional roles. Using techniques taught

during the session, attendees will collaboratively work through these scenarios, crafting clear and professional responses. The goal is to provide relevant and personalized strategies that each participant can apply directly to their own experiences.

In addition to discussions and scenario analysis, the session will include a goal-setting component.

Harrahill and Reynolds-East hope participants will develop concrete strategies to overcome specific communication challenges in the educational environment.

The 2025 ESP National Conference is a valuable opportunity for paraprofessionals and education support staff to gain new insights and practical skills, and the session presented by Mary Reynolds-East and Patricia Harrahill will be a key component in helping attendees strengthen their communication strategies in the workplace.

Education Support Professionals Day



#WeLoveOurESPs



There is strength in numbers!

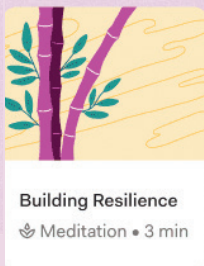
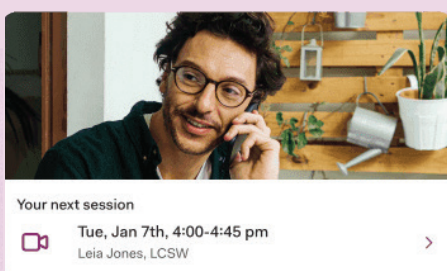
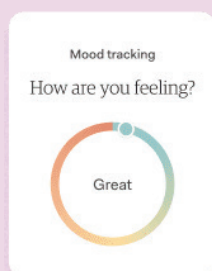
NSEA works with ESPs to create learning opportunities and supports for them to elevate their professional excellence throughout their careers. Together, we can make good things happen, including:

- Securing better pay, benefits, and working conditions;
- Gaining Professional Development and leadership training;
- Having strong, effective representation in job-related disputes;
- Accessing affordable life, health, disability, and casualty insurance programs; and
- Receiving on-the-job liability insurance of up to \$1 million.

Contact NSEA today at (800) 742-0047 or email questions to info@nea.org.



Get the NEA Mental Health Program at No Cost!



AbleTo

For NEA members only, the NEA Members Insurance Trust is offering **NO-COST ACCESS** to the NEA Mental Health Program, powered by AbleTo.

Rethink how you manage your mental health. Get clinically-validated tools for stress, anxiety, depression, or whatever you're going through. Whether you're feeling anxious, lonely, overwhelmed, or just burned out, AbleTo will meet you where you're at. Helping you live life to the fullest. Each of our personalized virtual mental health programs empowers you to build coping skills and manage life's ups and downs.

Get all of the support you need to improve your mental health—anywhere, anytime—with a confidential, on-demand mobile app.

Enjoy unlimited access to AbleTo. Get started now at: www.neamb.com/mentalhealth.

#ESPBillofRights

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- ☒ Recognition and Respect
- ☒ Safe and Healthy Work Environment
- ☒ Affordable Healthcare
- ☒ Paid Leave
- ☒ Professional Learning and Career Advancement
- ☒ Workload and Staffing
- ☒ Retirement
- ☒ Protection from Privatization
- ☒ Right to Bargain

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nea.org/ESPBillofRights
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TRISH GUINAN

Message from the Executive Director

Healthcare Expenses

Healthcare is a central issue in negotiating collective bargaining agreements. Healthcare costs are often one of the largest expenses Americans face. Without good healthcare coverage a serious illness or injury can lead to financial hardships.

I spent time as both the Fremont Education Association President and represented our members at the bargaining table as a negotiator. Back then, the school district negotiated with insurers for our health care.

Offering comprehensive healthcare plans can be a very expensive and an individual school district searching for a balance of cost-savings and good coverage will often get caught in an endless cycle of bait and switch with insurance companies.

Bait and Switch

Oftentimes, insurance companies would underbid the Fremont Public School District in the first year of coverage to gain our business. With such a small pool of people, around 300 at the time, the insurance provider was unable to sustain the cost advantage, and our health insurance premiums would spike. This triggered a costly and time-intensive search for a new insurer. It was a huge benefit for members and the district when Fremont Public Schools joined the Educators Health Alliance (EHA) in 2004.

Educators Health Alliance

The EHA is a non-profit corporation representing the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB), the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA), and the Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA). Together, we procure quality, affordable health care insurance for public education employees in our state.

The EHA plan has a strong competitive advantage because it is able to spread the costs of health care for participants over a much larger group of insureds: The plan covers

more than 88,000 lives. Smaller size groups do not have the ability to spread high-cost claims to their group without significantly increasing their premiums.

Last year, I was elected EHA Board Chair, taking over for former NSEA Associate Executive Director and Comptroller Sheri Jablonski.

EHA Board members understand the daily realities that teachers face in the classroom because the Board is comprised of classroom teachers, administrators and local school board members. EHA Board members come from around the state to represent Nebraska's public education community. They work collaboratively to create an insurance plan that is tailored to the needs of educators and their families.

From 1960 to Today

The EHA plan evolved from a statewide health care plan NSEA founded in the 1960s. With the introduction of collective bargaining in the late 1960's, formal agreements began to include provisions for districts to share the cost of the insurance premiums. Serious tension developed as the cost of those premiums escalated. It would take more than three decades before all parties would come together to create a provisional Educators' Health Alliance (EHA) to work towards the maintenance of a high quality health care plan at a sustainable cost. NSEA remains an influential majority on the EHA Board with six of the 12 voting-members representing the NSEA, including myself.

Together, we have managed the plan so well that it can boast more than 20 years without a double-digit increase in rates. With rising healthcare costs, the board is actively exploring ways to keep healthcare affordable. Rates for 2025-26 will be released in early November.

Visit www.chaplan.org or download the EHA app to learn more about your health care benefits.

“
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Strengthening Our Community:

The Vital Role of NSEA-Retired Members in Local Units

As valued members of the Nebraska State Education Association-Retired (NSEA-Retired), your ongoing involvement in local units is not just beneficial but essential for fostering a strong and supportive community. Local units in Lincoln, Omaha, Platte-Valley, Bellevue, and Wilbur Clatonia offer a plethora of programs, networking opportunities, camaraderie, and unique experiences that enrich the lives of our retired educators.

Participating in a local unit provides numerous benefits. It allows you to stay connected with fellow retirees, share your wisdom and experiences, and continue to contribute to the field of education in meaningful ways. The programs organized by these local units cater to a wide range of interests, from professional development workshops to social gatherings, ensuring that there is something for everyone.

Networking within your local unit opens up avenues for collaboration, mentorship, and lifelong learning. The camaraderie built through shared experiences and common goals creates a sense of belonging and purpose. The unique experiences offered by each local unit add a layer of diversity and enrichment to your retirement years, making them truly fulfilling and enjoyable.

For those members who do not have a local unit nearby, we encourage you to consider starting one on your own. By taking the initiative to establish a local unit in your area, you not only create a space for retired educators to connect and engage but also contribute to the growth and strength of NSEA-Retired as a whole. Please contact John Heineman at ringojohn@aol.com for support in starting a local unit.

Together, we can make our association stronger and more resilient. By uniting under the shared mission of protecting education and advocating for the rights of educators, we can create a supportive community that uplifts and empowers each member.



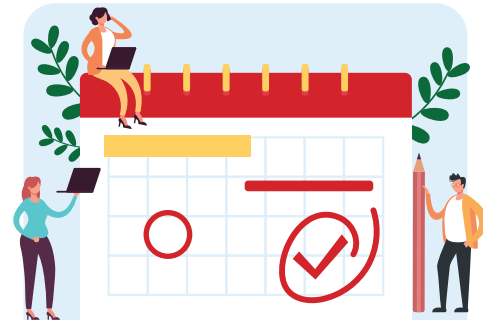
Strengthening Our Community: 1. LEA-Retired members gather to learn about volunteer opportunities with TeamMates Mentoring. Members also heard from State Board of Education candidate Kristin Christensen. **2.** Platte Valley Retired Education Association members learn about Sandhill Cranes at the Crane Trust & Nature Center in Wood River. **3.** NSEA-Retired members gather in Kearney for the 2024 Fall Conference.



NSEA-Retired members who wish to become more active and engaged in the Association are encouraged to attend this inaugural event in conjunction with Lobby Day on Feb. 17-18, 2025.

Attendees will receive detailed information about NSEA-Retired leadership opportunities.

Travel expenses, including mileage, hotel accommodations, and meals, will be covered. Further details will be communicated via email.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Thursday, Nov. 7

Blue Cross & BlueShield of Neb. information session in Norfolk

Monday, Nov. 11

Blue Cross & BlueShield of Neb. information session in Omaha

Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2025

Governance/Lobby Day

Thursday, April 24, 2025

Spring Conference

For more dates & information, visit www.nsea.org/retired



Take a closer look

Our *insurance and retirement solutions* help educators protect what they have today and prepare for a successful tomorrow.

We think you'll like what you see.

Learn more



Horace Mann Service Corporation and certain of its affiliates (Horace Mann) enter into agreements with educational associations where Horace Mann pays the association to provide services aimed at familiarizing association members with the Horace Mann brand, products or services. For more information, email your inquiry to association.relations@horacemann.com.

AM-C04485 (1-24)



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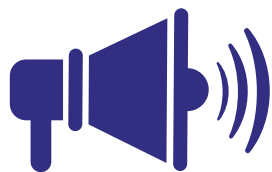
Speaking of Education

“Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education...to prepare each citizen to choose wisely and to enable him to choose freely are paramount functions of the schools in a democracy.”

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

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

2024 General Election



PUBLIC EDUCATION CANDIDATES

All candidates were interviewed by NSEA members and earned the recommendation because of their support of public education. The General Election is Tuesday, November 5! Please VOTE!

U.S. SENATE

Preston Love Jr. (D)

Dan Osborn (I)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 1

Sen. Carol Blood (D)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 2

Sen. Tony Vargas (D)

LEGISLATURE

LD 01: Dennis Schaardt

LD 25: Nicki Behmer Popp

LD 03: Victor Rountree

LD 27: Jason Prokop

LD 05: Margo Juarez

LD 29: Sen. Eliot Bostar

LD 07: Dunixi Guereca

LD 31: Mary Ann Folchert

**LD 09: Sen. John
Cavanaugh**

**LD 33: Dan Lonowski &
Michelle Smith**

**LD 11: Sen. Terrell
McKinney**

LD 35: Dan Quick

**LD 13: Nick Batter &
Ashlei Spivey**

LD 39: Allison Heimes

**LD 15: Dave
Wordekemper**

LD 45: Sarah Centineo

LD 19: Jeanne Reigle

LD 49: Jen Day

LD 21: Seth Derner

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

District 1: Kristin Christensen

District 2: Maggie Douglas

District 3: Bill McAllister

District 4: Liz Renner

