

# THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ October 2017



## A DREAM DEFERRED

*Promising Career May be Derailed by Immigration Status*

NSEA: No Abuse of Sick Leave • Take a Moment to Lead from Within

## Bargaining Season Opens on Nov. 1

### Negotiators, Members Advised to Know Dates, Work with NSEA Field Staff

Although now six years old, LB397 fundamentally changed the way teaching contracts are bargained in Nebraska.

Before LB397, contract negotiations might have extended into the summer and sometimes even into the school year that was being bargained.

With LB397, the Legislature set a firm bargaining schedule with a timeline and deadlines that most experienced negotiators have now internalized. Even so, it's a good idea to help your local association bargaining team and negotiators better understand the importance of those dates.

The statutory start of bargaining for the 2018-19 contract is Nov. 1. That means that negotiations teams need

to have met with their school board counterpart on or by that date in order to set future meeting dates. They may also discuss issues of interest, but need not have exchanged proposals.

Association and school board bargaining teams then essentially have two months to bargain, with a goal of wrapping up negotiations with a tentative agreement sometime in January.

Locals that have met to bargain at least four times and have still not reached agreement should be in regular consultation with their NSEA organizational specialist by January. Provisions in the new law force negotiations to adhere to tight timelines once bargaining nears the end of January, so working closely with your NSEA organizational specialist becomes critical.

While the statutory timeline now offers firm dates for negotiators, the overall calendar provides for several

weeks of bargaining and has resulted in a smooth and often constructive process.

"Most important, negotiators should be aware of problematic comments, proposals and strategies they observe during contract talks, and they should share those issues with their NSEA organizational specialist," said Randy Gordon, NSEA's collective bargaining specialist.

Also on the agenda for local associations this fall is the highly recommended request for recognition to bargain the 2019-20 agreement. Although that contract will not be negotiated for another year, by making the request for that required action before the current bargaining takes place, local associations can avoid board confusion later this fall.

Local associations that are certified bargaining agents only need to notify their local school board of their desire to begin negotiations each fall.

If your local association is interested in attaining certified bargaining agent status, contact your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.



Gordon

## Lids, Schedules, Contracts on Tap at Panhandle Advocacy

Western Nebraska negotiators: don't miss the NSEA Panhandle District's Cowboy-Up Advocacy Conference at Gering's Weborg 21 Centre on Saturday, Oct. 21.

The conference will feature many topics covered at NSEA Advocacy Conference held in Columbus in September. New NSEA President Jenni Benson, Vice President Paul Schulte and Executive Director Maddie Fennell are scheduled to attend.

"The conference will be a great learning

opportunity for both new and experienced negotiators," said Benson.

The format will allow individual questions and discussions with other negotiations teams. Topics tentatively include:

- Salary schedule analysis.
- School district levy lids, school financial reports, state funding and state aid.
- The new NEA 360/education communities programming.
- Advocating for members through the

contract.

- Writing/managing contract proposals.
- NSEA's strategic plan and new 501c3, the Leading Excellence and Robust Networks (LEARN) program.
- Advocating for students.

There will be a one-car-per-local reimbursement for those traveling 30 miles or more. For details and to register, go to:

[www.nsea.org/17Cowboy](http://www.nsea.org/17Cowboy)

**Cover:** With his residency status in question, Crete High School Counselor Joel Lemus-Leon tells the story of his life as a Dreamer, the love he has for his job, the students he works with and the country he loves. For the full story turn to

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# The Heart of It All



**NSEA President  
Jenni Benson**

“

*The public school approach will always work better than the hard sell of a top-down, make-money-off-our-kids scheme being pushed by DeVos.*

”

I taught high schoolers the past two years but I am an elementary school teacher at heart. No matter where or what I teach, I’ve found that there isn’t much difference in the teacher-student-learning equation.

The heart of teaching is always in the relationships we, as teachers, build with our students.

Growing up, I didn’t think there was much substance in the relationships I had with my teachers. My home life was chaotic, a fact that I believed my teachers seldom, if ever, knew. And yet, as I look back, I have a much better understanding and perspective. I realize that my home life was not all that different from the home life of many students with whom teachers work every day. My appreciation for my teachers and the importance of the relationships they built with their students has grown exponentially.

Recently, I joined in a celebration of public schools as a counterpoint to the Nebraska visit of U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. DeVos is an advocate for the privatization of and profiteering from our public schools using voucher and charter school schemes. Her visit was a powerful reminder of the need for positive relationships as we stand against charter and voucher schemes.

### Just a Glimpse

I did not get to express my thoughts directly to the Secretary. In fact, three of her four stops in Nebraska were at private or parochial institutions. That was largely the tenor of her entire “Rethink Schools Tour.” While DeVos’ itinerary was closely guarded, reports indicate she made visits to six states with two-thirds of her stops at private or parochial or charter schools of some kind.

My message to DeVos is simple. It echoes what I voiced at a celebration of public schools held on the second day of the DeVos visit to Nebraska.

At the celebration, I noted that DeVos had experienced just a glimpse of the great teaching and learning – and the exciting innovation – taking place in Nebraska’s excellent public schools.

I hope that DeVos left Nebraska with an appreciation of the quality education that can go on public schools that do not have to deal with the distraction and funding drains of charter schools and voucher schemes.

It is important that DeVos – and our current in-state policymakers – understand that Nebraska parents and students already have school choice. Those choices range from our public focus schools to career academies to choosing to attend any public school in any district in the state. (In fact, last school year, 22,148 Nebraska public school students used their option enrollment choice.)

NSEA and other Nebraska public school advocates support opportunities for all students, re-

gardless of background or place of residence. The chances a child has for success should not depend on winning a charter lottery, affording private school, or living in the right ZIP code.

If we’re serious about every child’s future, let’s get serious about doing what works. Let us concentrate on:

- Providing the resources our neighborhood public schools need, so students have the support they need;
- Providing more one-on-one attention to students;
- Offering inviting classrooms; and
- Making a well-rounded curriculum available to every student in every discipline.

### Charter Failures

If DeVos were paying attention, she would know that Nebraskans do not need, nor do we want, our public tax dollars to be spent on private schools.

In most states, charter schools are managed by for-profit, out-of-state corporations that put profits ahead of student well-being and classroom learning. Instead of putting these tax dollars into classrooms where they belong, some of these companies make millions of dollars off taxpayers.

Independent studies show a number of charter schools have failed to perform, wasted taxpayer dollars and diverted needed funding from public schools. A 2015 report by the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools found that fraud and mismanagement by charter schools cost taxpayers more than \$200 million in just 15 states.

### The Nurturing Link

To help children in under-performing schools, we need not line the pockets of the already wealthy who invest in corporate schools. Instead, we must ensure that taxpayer dollars are invested in public schools to allow for the innovation that DeVos claims to embrace.

We know that innovation enhances quality and opportunity in public education – and that educators are the force that drives creative solutions. We know what works in the classroom, and we take seriously our responsibility to nurture every student.

“Nurture” links back to the relationships that I believe are so important in teaching and learning.

I hope that Secretary DeVos learned how and why Nebraska is doing it right. I hope she took careful notes about what works. This I know: the public school approach, the learning, the caring and the relationships, will always work better than the hard sell of a top-down, make-money-off-our-kids scheme being pushed by DeVos. At the heart of the matter, it’s a scheme Nebraskans are not buying.



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# Teacher Salaries Trail Those With Like Degrees

## Middle Class Rises; Teachers Work More, Earn Less

On the same day the U.S. Census Bureau reported that middle-class American income set an all-time record last year, U.S. teachers learned a more sobering fact.

Education Week magazine reported that while American teachers out-earn teachers in most other countries, they trail those with similar education levels in other professions more than teachers in any other developed country.

The 500-page annual *Education at a Glance* report from the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation said that American teachers make less than 60 cents on every dollar made by others with their education level, the biggest gap of any developed country. And, said the magazine's report, "at every grade level, U.S. teachers work longer hours than their international counterparts."

In America, the magazine reported, as an example, the average 7th grade teacher works 1,366 hours at school each year, including more than 980 hours of teaching. That is nearly 270 more hours of teaching than the international average.

On Sept. 12, the Census Bureau reported that middle-class income hit \$59,039 in 2016, besting the previous high set in 1999.

The Bureau also noted that in 2016 the country's poverty rate fell to 12.7 percent,

## Kansas, Oklahoma Salaries in Free Fall

Teacher salaries in Oklahoma and Kansas have plummeted to the Bottom 10 over the past few years.

Education Week magazine reported the average teacher salary in Oklahoma in 2016-17 was \$42,647, ahead of only Mississippi. The \$47,127 average salary in Kansas, home of the Gov. Brownback Experiment, came in at 9th lowest. As recently as 10 years ago, Kansas teacher salaries ranked 10 spots higher.

The average salary in Nebraska, according to the Education Week story — which relied on a poll by GoBankingRates.com — came in at \$55,360.

When released in the spring, the research-heavy NEA's annual Rankings and Estimates Report showed more conservative numbers, listing the average salary in Nebraska at \$51,514, or 35th in the country. Kansas was at \$48,837, or 44th in the country; and Oklahoma was at \$47,326, or 47th in the U.S. Iowa was at \$56,995 (22nd) and Wyoming was at \$60,328 (17th).

An August story from The Associated Press shed further light on the teacher salary situation in Oklahoma. Budget cuts — the result of self-inflicted deep reductions in tax rates, along with lower energy prices — resulted in a 10-year stretch of no pay raises for Oklahoma teachers.

In many cases, The Associated Press reported, teachers make little enough that their own children qualify for reduced-price school lunches. One Tulsa teacher, Tiona Bowman, earned a low enough salary that she qualified for a subsidized Habitat for Humanity home.

"Obviously, I was grateful and excited," said Bowman, who teaches middle-school English. Her \$34,000 salary made her eligible for the no-interest loan on a Habitat for Humanity home. "But on the other hand, I was like: I went to school for all these years, I have these degrees, and I qualify for a program like this?"

Fortunately, help may be on the way. Some Oklahoma lawmakers say raising teacher pay is a top priority. Under a bill filed in the Oklahoma Legislature, teachers in that state would receive a \$10,000 pay raise by 2021.

the lowest rate in the past 10 years. In addition, 91.2 percent of Americans had health insurance for the entire year.

Regarding the income numbers, Census officials noted that methodology changed

slightly in 2014, lending some hesitancy to an absolute declaration of highest median income ever. Nonetheless, officials agreed that income has grown strongly over the past few years.

## NEA Cheers Student Debt Lawsuit against DOE

Attorneys general of 18 states and the District of Columbia in July filed suit against U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos over a delay of implementing student borrower defense regulations.

The lawsuit challenges the alleged unlawful repeal of a final agency regulation known as the "Borrower Defense Rule" that was designed to hold post-secondary institutions accountable for misconduct and to relieve students from federal loan indebtedness incurred as a result of misconduct.

The U.S. Department of Education had indefinitely delayed implementation of rules that were to let borrowers seek loan forgiveness if their schools deceived them or committed fraud. NEA President Lily Eskelsen García lauded the lawsuit.

"It is simply wrong that the Department of Education would want to do away with regulations that would protect students," said Eskelsen Garcia.

She said NEA will continue to push for college affordability.

## State Board of Education Awarded Grant to Strengthen Early Childhood Education

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) has awarded four states — Nebraska, Iowa, Michigan and New York — grants totaling \$14,000 each over two years to investigate and improve early childhood education workforce conditions in their respective states. Funded through a grant from the Foundation for Child Development, this project reignites NASBE's early learning work and establishes a state network tasked with developing, revising, and adopting early childhood education policies that other state boards can replicate.

State boards set requirements for core early learning standards, advance workforce credentialing and preparation, and improve professional development opportunities. Network states will focus their efforts on educator competencies and certification, educator preparation programs, educator career pathways and professional development, and educator evaluation.

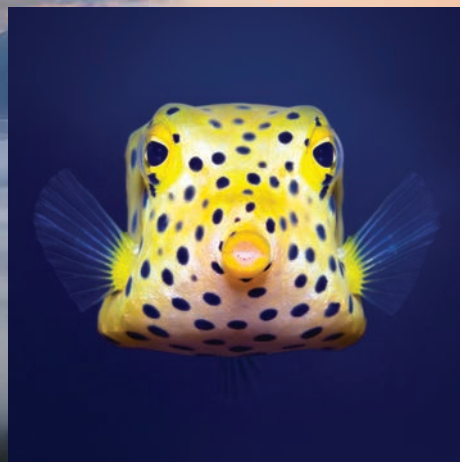
Nebraska's state board will expand training opportunities for teachers, principals, and other administrators with responsibilities for educating children from birth through third grade.

NASBE's Early Learning Network is funded through a grant from the Foundation for Child Development, in collaboration with National League of Cities and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Learn more at:

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

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**Testimonial Expertise:** Retired Lincoln teacher and former Nebraska Teacher of the Year John Heineman told senators in September that legislative action can affect the number of teachers available to serve as substitutes. He urged senators to take action that would widen, not limit, the pool of available, certificated substitute teachers.

# Where Have the Substitutes Gone?

## Teacher Abuse of Sick Leave a ‘False Perception,’ Not the Cause of Shortage, Says NSEA

Another NSEA survey, and another hot-button issue uncovered.

In early September, NSEA sent an email survey to all active pre-K-12 teachers, asking for thoughts on the substitute teacher shortage in Nebraska. Within the first 12 hours, more than 3,500 members had responded.

The survey was conducted in response to an interim hearing on the substitute teacher shortage conducted by the Legislature’s Education Committee, led by North Platte Sen. Mike Groene.

The intent of the committee’s study was broad, but also pointedly targeted negotiated contracts between school districts and teachers.

As introduced before the Legislature, the study would look at “when and why substitute teachers are used, the use of substitute teachers due to sabbaticals or professional development activities and conference attendance by certificated teachers, how frequently substitute teachers are used for various purposes, the fiscal impact of using substitute teachers, and *the relationship between collective*

*bargaining agreements and the use of substitute teachers.”*

John Heineman, a retired teacher who substitutes, told senators the pool of retired teachers available to substitute changes each year. He said unsuccessful attempts were made during the 2017 session of the Legislature to limit the ability of teachers to substitute immediately following their retirement.

“If that pool is not replenished yearly by newly-retired teachers, the number of substitutes available to the school district starts shrinking due to both physical and mental requirements of the job,” he said.

“Policies made by the Legislature should help support and fill – not drain – this pool of retired teachers,” said Heineman, who was Nebraska’s Teacher of the Year in 2000.

Figures offered by Deputy Commissioner of Education Brian Halstead seemed to bear out the fact that the pool of substitutes is shrinking.

Halstead said his department’s research shows that while the number of substitute teachers available each year is shrinking, the

number of days worked by substitutes each year is increasing.

In the 2012-13 school year, there were 9,715 substitutes available statewide, according to NDOE research. Last year, that number had fallen to 9,207.

### ‘False Perception’

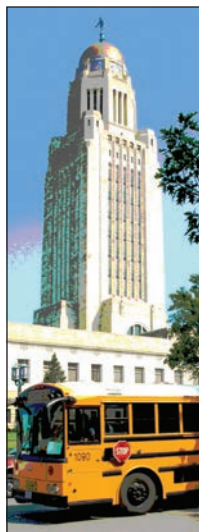
NSEA Executive Director Maddie Fennell told senators that the substitute shortage is a border-to-border concern. She defended the use of substitutes by school districts.

“There is a false perception among some who believe teachers over-utilize sick leave days, causing a shortage of substitute teachers in Nebraska,” she said. “I can assure you that this is not the case.”

Teachers are parents, they have family responsibilities, and they sometimes may stay at home to care for their children. When that happens, they must prepare for a substitute, and then make up unfulfilled work upon their return.

“Teachers work in an environment that requires the utmost responsibility and consistency. The goal is to be gone from the classroom as rarely as possible while school is in session,” she said.

The survey also indicated that many active teacher absences can be tied to school



**Nebraska Legislature**

related activities and required professional development programming.

Fennell said the survey showed:

■ Personal illness was most often cited for as the reason for a teacher's absence from the classroom. Thirty-six percent of respondents selected illness as the top reason for absence. Family illness or emergency was second, with nearly 25 percent of respondents selecting that as the top reason for absence. Third was school-related activities (14 percent) and fourth was professional development (9 percent).

■ Thirty-six percent of respondents used between three and six days of leave requiring a substitute during 2016-17.

■ More than 91 percent of members work to avoid the use of a substitute. Fifty-five percent said there is too much work involved to prepare for a substitute. Nearly 24 percent said they were concerned students would fall behind under a sub.

### Ease the Service Break

Heineman suggested that the shortage might be eased if the Legislature would shorten the 180-day break in service a retired teacher must now take before they can return to teaching. The service break for state patrol, county and state employees is 120 days. Heineman suggested that a matching 120-day break might be appropriate.

In his Sept. 21 newspaper column to constituents, Groene reported that a majority of superintendents responding to a survey from his office recommended allowing

## Student Safety and Warm Bodies: Members Voice Overwhelming Support for Certificated Substitutes

**Eighty percent of the 4,600 respondents to a September NSEA survey said substitute teachers in Nebraska should have a teaching certificate. Remarks in support of that stance were pointed and emphatic. These are among the comments left by members on that issue:**

*"Teaching requires more than just a warm body that supervises kids for 8 hours. I expect that my substitute will be able to manage classroom procedures AND teach content that is outlined in the lesson plans left for them."*

*"This job is hard work and extremely important. It adds more stress to the building and team when someone comes in to sub and is not a trained, certified teacher. We wouldn't ask a lay person to set a broken bone, defend us in court, or conduct a root canal."*

*"The substitute generally will not be subbing in an area in which the sub has great knowledge. A person who is able to follow the directions left by the teacher and is willing to and capable of working well with young people should be welcomed and encouraged to substitute in classrooms."*

*"(When) Substitutes are teaching my class, I want to feel comfortable that my students are receiving the best education available to them while I am gone."*

*"If I leave for the day I need to know my students will be safe and someone will be able to carry out my duties. I would feel so uncomfortable having someone in my classroom that is not trained, especially for those kids that have behavior plans."*

*"I expect and want the district to hire the best educated person to work with my students and implement the lesson plans that I work so hard to create."*

retired teachers to substitute *immediately* upon retirement.

Fennell said the committee should focus on ways to encourage certificated teachers to be willing to substitute.

"We are fortunate in this state that we

have one of the best teaching corps in the nation," said Fennell. "We want to keep it that way, and we believe parents and patrons also want to keep it that way. It's the right thing to do for our kids, for our economy and for the teaching profession."

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# Educators: Take a Minute to Lead from Within

## Classroom Teachers in Unique Position to Advocate for Policies, Practices

By Dr. Abby Burke,  
Instructor of Teacher Education  
University of Nebraska Omaha

Classroom teachers are leaders who lead from within. They are immersed in educational settings on a regular basis working with students, colleagues, administrators, the community and other stakeholders. They have a body of knowledge about teaching and learning that is applied as they work with students every day. These leaders have the expertise that provides them the ability to make informed decisions about what is best for the students with whom they work. Leadership comes in many forms.

How might teachers lead from within to make positive change? Change can come easily and with a small investment of time and energy. Consider these quick methods:

■ **2 minutes:** Share a success story from the classroom via social media. Sharing success stories and going public with the good work that educators are doing on a regular basis helps stakeholders to better recognize and understand the impactful things that are happening in our public schools.

■ **5 minutes:** Meet with an administrator to share a current research-based best innovative practice. Administrators traditionally have a body of knowledge about instructional leadership. Teachers, on the other hand, traditionally have a deep understanding of curriculum practices. Teachers and administrators working together to make sound curriculum decisions is a win-win.

■ **10 minutes:** Call or email your legislative representative



Burke

to inform them how an upcoming legislative bill may positively or negatively affect students, schools, the community etc. Teachers have the expertise about how policies can affect teaching and learning, and policymakers need educator input to be able to make informed decisions. Or you can learn more about the Legislature at:

[nsea.org/legislative-updates](http://nsea.org/legislative-updates)

■ **30 minutes:** Have coffee with your local school board member to share a current social justice or service learning project your students are involved in. School board members want to make decisions that are best for their schools and community. It is vital that school board members have opportunities to hear what good practices are happening. Educating your school board can ensure that appropriate resources are available to support high quality instruction for all students.

■ **45 minutes:** Present at a staff meeting on a current education topic. You are providing others an opportunity to learn about a current topic. More importantly you are inviting your colleagues into your world of learning and professional growth.

■ **60 minutes:** Present at a district level curriculum workshop. Share a successful innovation that you are implementing in your classroom. Everyone benefits when they learn how teachers have worked to implement effective practices in a classroom. This experience can also be an opportunity to grow your professional learning network.

Classroom teachers are in a unique position to advocate for effective policies and practices that can directly and positively affect work with students on a daily basis. Teachers have the capacity to improve teaching and learning, and that can have a significant impact on educational change.

**Educators:** Go forth and lead from within!

## Survey Sees Challenges for Early Childhood Teachers

### Implications Critical for Teachers, Kids Across Nebraska

A new study reveals some areas of promise within the early care and education field in Nebraska but also points to a number of significant challenges facing teachers and child care providers who guide and nurture young children's learning and development during the critical first eight years of life.

The findings have serious implications for Nebraska, said Samuel J. Meisels, founding executive director of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute.

"Teachers and child care providers are fundamental to young children achieving their potential and growing into capable and confident young people," he said. "How we prepare, compensate, and support these professionals is a critical issue facing families and communities statewide."

Conducted by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska Early Childhood

Workforce Survey is the largest, most comprehensive ever of the state's early childhood workforce. The 1,600 participants represented four early childhood settings: licensed home-based child care programs; licensed center-based programs; public pre-kindergarten programs; and elementary schools serving children in kindergarten through grade three (K-3).

Key findings include:

■ **Lack of Livable Wages and Benefits:** Home-based providers and center-based teachers earn a median wage of \$11 an hour, roughly half as much as pre-kindergarten (\$21 an hour) and K-3 teachers (\$23 an hour.) Center-based teachers' median annual salary of \$18,706 is nearly \$7,800 below the poverty line for a family of four.

■ **Reliance on Second Jobs and Public Assistance:** Approximately 20 percent of pre-kindergarten and K-3 teachers hold second jobs, and 27 percent of home-based providers and 20 percent of center-based teachers utilize public assistance.

■ **Uneven and Often Insufficient Education and Preparation:** Less than half of K-3 teachers surveyed felt well-

prepared to work with families at the start of their careers. Between 27 percent and 50 percent of teachers and childcare providers did not feel well-prepared to teach at the beginning of their careers.

■ **Lack of Diversity:** An overwhelming majority of Nebraska's early childhood workforce is white. However, on average, classrooms are composed of 10 percent to 22 percent of students who are racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse.

■ **Stress and Well-Being:** Eight percent to 11 percent of all early childhood educators report clinically significant depressive symptoms.

Despite the challenges, findings point to several areas of promise in Nebraska. Teachers tend to have considerable experience in the field — 12 years or more on average — which demonstrates a commitment to their work. Teachers participate in a variety of trainings and ongoing professional development and, among teachers with degrees, most majored in education-related fields.

To view the report, visit:

[buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/  
workforce-survey](http://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/workforce-survey)



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# It's Time to Plan for Delegate Assembly!

## NSEA's Annual Meet Set for April 27-28

The school year is barely underway, but it isn't too soon to be thinking about April 2018 and NSEA's Delegate Assembly.

For the uninitiated, Delegate Assembly is the once-a-year annual business meeting of the Nebraska State Education Association. Members from across the state, representing local associations large and small, are elected to attend and manage the business and future course of the Association.

Inspiring speakers and discussion by all delegates on educational issues, and consideration of updates to NSEA Bylaws and Resolutions, are part of the Assembly action.

It will be the first Delegate Assembly under the leadership of NSEA President Jenni Benson, Lincoln.

"Plans for Delegate Assembly 2018 are underway, and we are excited to kick off NSEA's next 150 years with our dedicated members," said Benson.

NSEA celebrated 150 years at the April 2017 Delegate Assembly. NSEA's first meeting was held as the Nebraska State Teachers Association in Brownville on Oct. 16, 1867, just months after Nebraska gained statehood. NSEA is the state's oldest professional association.

The 2018 Delegate Assembly is scheduled for Friday and Saturday, April 27-28, at Lincoln's Cornhusker Marriott hotel.

To make your interest in serving as a del-

## Recognize a Colleague's Excellence

Now is a good time to begin discussing who you or your association might nominate for one of the honors to be given at NSEA's Delegate Assembly in April.

Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, ESP or deserving group. Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 16, 2018, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online, with required supporting material mailed to the NSEA. Online nomination forms are found under the 'Call for Nominations' link at:

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

The 2018 Delegate Assembly will be held at Lincoln's Cornhusker Marriott Hotel April 27-28. NSEA members are eligible for:

■ **NSEA Rookie of the Year:** To honor a first-year teacher who excelled in the 2016-17 school year.

■ **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 his or her job.

Finalists will be notified in March, with winners revealed at Delegate Assembly. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award. NSEA members are also eligible for:

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

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

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

Also to be presented:

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

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

egate known, contact your local association president, your local association building or

faculty representative, or your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.



**Science and Numbers:** NSEA hosted a booth at the joint September conference of the Nebraska Association of Teachers of Mathematics and the Nebraska Association of Teachers of Science. At left, NSEA Organizational Specialist Matt Pittman visits with Louisville Education Association members Melanie Reeves and Jamie Toelle. At right, Organizational Specialist Carol Hicks met with Mitchell Education Association's Matt Chrisman. The conference was held in Kearney.

# A Dream Denied?

## Crete Counselor's Promising Career May be Derailed by Immigration Status

One of the many assignments Joel Lemus-Leon has taken on in his role as a guidance counselor at Crete High School is sponsorship of the Grassroots Leadership Development Program for seniors.

Under his tutelage, the seniors meet with school, city and county officials to learn about the roles those officials play in local government.

"I want students to understand that there are a lot of decisions being made in every town, and they need to think about being a part of that, whether it's the school board, whether it's the city council, whether it's just voting," said Lemus-Leon.

There is great irony in the fact that Lemus-Leon is teaching high school students to become valued, involved citizens. Born in Mexico, he was brought into the U.S., undocumented, by his parents when he was 6. Since his arrival 25 years ago, Lemus-Leon has done all he can to become a contributing, valued resident of his community and his state.

Yet in the unsettled world of U.S. immigration law, Lemus-Leon is just that: a resident, not a citizen. He is a textbook representative of the DREAMers – the young, undocumented immigrants brought into the U.S. as children.

The term DREAMer takes its name from the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, first introduced in Congress in 2001, but never enacted. The act would have granted legal status to immigrant children like Lemus-Leon.

Until recently, Lemus-Leon was one of 3,000 Nebraska youth and 800,000 across the United States living under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) status. DACA gives those young undocumented immigrants like Lemus-Leon who meet certain conditions temporary protection from deportation.

His DACA permit expires in August 2018. Following executive action by President Donald Trump in early September, he no can longer apply to renew his DACA permit. That leaves Lemus-Leon out of options. DACA does not allow a pathway to U.S. citizenship.

As tears welled from his eyes, Lemus-Leon voiced his current status out loud for the first time.

"If everything goes the way that it is now, this will be my last year at Crete."

Without congressional action, his dream may become a dream denied.

### 'An Excellent Role Model'

Lemus-Leon clearly loves the students and the challenges he faces as a counselor. He is a member of the NSEA family. He loves the school, the community and, with his fiancée, has been pre-approved for a loan that will allow them to buy a home in Crete.

Rather than live in Crete, however, Lemus-Leon may be forced to leave and return to Mexico. Crete High School Principal Tim Conway sees that as a loss for both school and community.

Conway said Lemus-Leon "jumped out at us" when the district was looking for a new counselor. Five years later, he continues to stand out.

"The kids love him, the parents love him, the community loves him," said Conway. "He bridges that gap."

Lemus-Leon is an assistant soccer coach, and serves as an interpreter, particularly for younger, non-English speaking students. His work helps guide those kids to develop team player skills. In the halls of Crete High, he works with all kids, but serves as "an excellent role model for our Hispanic males," said Conway.

"He's quick to say 'you are not doing that. That is not what we do here,'" he said.

CRETE  
HIGH

"If I could continue to be just as American as an

In my opinion, what are our core values, and being a responsible person, paying your taxes, law, contributing to society, and community to become

Joel Lemus-Leon, C

The loss would run deep if Lemus-Leon were to leave Crete.

"I don't know how far it would trickle down," said Conway. "A lot of community members know him, they see him and they are not afraid to talk to him about school issues. Our kids are the same way. It would be a pretty big loss."

### Dangerous Border Crossings

You might say his teaching career began at Monterrey, Mexico, where Lemus-Leon was born.

His parents were from the area. His grandparents still live in the state of Michoacan, Mexico.

"I won't say we were poor. We had a roof over our heads, but were not well off," he said. "My parents grew up in more poverty than my brothers and sisters and I did."

His father had been a landscaper – undocumented – in Southern California in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He was sometimes caught up in immigration sweeps and dropped off across the border in Tijuana. Lemus-Leon said it was difficult, but possible in those days, for his father to come

# SCHOOL

to prove that I am  
anybody else...

that means is the  
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crete High School Counselor



back across the border, return home and be at work the next morning.

But the return crossings could sometimes be dangerous. With a four-year-old U.S.-born son and baby Joel on the way, the family decided to return to Mexico. Lemus-Leon was born at Monterrey.

"I joke that I was made in the USA and born in Mexico," he said.

It was at Monterrey that his love for school was first fostered. When he was three or four years old, a neighbor girl with dreams of teaching frequently used him as her "student."

She did well enough that in his first day at kindergarten Lemus-Leon read along as his teacher was writing on the board. That would be the first of many times he caught the eye of an experienced educator.

Monterrey, however, was a large and sometimes dangerous city. Lemus-Leon has distinct memories of stabbing victims lying in the street as police officers arrived.

"My Dad's brothers told him he needed to get his family out of Monterrey," he said. They returned, undocumented, to California.

### Steered Toward College

They lived in California for a year, then moved to Nebraska. They made brief stops in Lexington, Overton and Columbus before settling in Schuyler when Lemus-Leon was a fourth grader.

By high school, he was playing soccer and was involved with the science and math clubs and the Multicultural Club.

It was at Schuyler Central High School that he caught the eye of another teacher, a science teacher, now the school counselor. She pushed Lemus-Leon toward something he didn't think possible: college.

"I grew really close to her not knowing truly what her intentions were, which were to get me to college," he said. "She knew more about me than I thought she did."

He had good relationships with his high school teachers and said that "having that love for them and what they do, teaching just grew on me. I've known pretty much since high school that I wanted to be an educator or work with kids in some way."

### No License, No Options

After graduating at Schuyler, he en-

rolled at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. A woman he'd never met funded much of his bachelor's program through a scholarship program for DACA youth.

At UNK he was president of Sigma Lambda Beta fraternity; was vice president of national counseling organization Chi Sigma Iota; a member of the Hispanic Student Association; and played intramural sports.

In the spring of his senior year, Lemus-Leon did a student teaching semester at Columbus Middle School, teaching math.

"Student teaching was a great experience, and I felt like I really connected with kids," he said. He was offered a job at Columbus Lakeview and other area schools. He might have stayed in the classroom, but was forced to turn down every offer.

"I didn't have a valid Social Security number. I wasn't able to obtain a teaching license," he said.

"I told my principal at Lakeview Middle School 'here's the reason I'm telling you no' and he understood that. I didn't have any other options at that point," he said.

### Funding Extended

Lemus-Leon returned to UNK and began work on a master's degree.

His scholarship benefactor extended funding for his master's degree in hopes it would make Lemus-Leon more marketable, or that statutory changes might come.

In May 2012, he was awarded a master's degree in counseling and mental health. He also met his benefactor.

"She is obviously someone who is very important in this whole piece," he said.

In June 2012, under intense pressure from immigration advocates, and after years of congressional inaction, President Barack Obama instituted DACA.

### DACA Children Seen as an Asset

DACA recipients gave their name, address and fingerprints and other details, to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in exchange for a two-year, renewable, deportation waiver. They must have had no criminal record and offer proof they entered the U.S. before the age of 16. They could then get a work permit and a Social Security number. The permit cost: \$495.

DACA drew support from a broad alliance of clergy, business and humanitarian leaders. Even so, 10 state attorney generals, including Nebraska's, threatened a lawsuit against the federal government, alleging that DACA is unconstitutional. The threat of legal action is thought to have pushed Trump to rescind DACA.

As it stands, no DACA permits will be renewed after Oct. 5. Current permits will begin to expire in March.

Obama's administration, said Lemus-Leon, saw DACA youth as an asset.

"They are no threat to national security.

They are learning English, are in school or the military,” said Lemus-Leon. “They’re doing a lot of things we would want anybody in the United States to do. We want to keep them in our country, we want them to contribute to our economy.”

### No ‘Proactive’ Sharing

That is how Lemus-Leon has tried to live.

He obeys the law and tries to contribute as much as he can to his school and community. He has concerns, however, about some DACA provisions.

“When we applied for DACA we had a background check, we had to give our fingerprints, our parents’ information, our information,” he said.

At that point, the worry was that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would visit his home. But he was told that the federal agency that collected his personal information and fingerprints would not share those details with ICE.

“Now what I’ve heard is that they will not *proactively* give that information to immigration, which in my head is different from saying we’re going to keep it confidential. It means ‘we’re not going to give it to them, but if they come ask for it....,’” said Lemus-Leon.

“I’m not worried about me, but my parents’ information is there,” he said. “So, that’s the other big worry: what they do with that information.”

### Dismantling DACA Affects Communities, Neighbors

Lemus-Leon has begun to overcome what he says is the shame and apprehension surrounding his status.

“It’s still difficult to talk about, because you’re told by your parents not to talk to anybody about this in any way because you don’t know what peoples’ intentions might be, or what they might do with that information,” he said.

He now believes that unless he puts a face to the situation, people won’t make a connection – they won’t realize that dismantling DACA affects people in their community.

“I’m trying to encourage other people to say ‘look, we have to let other people know that we’re here, and that we’re their neighbors, and that we are their kids’ counselors and their teachers and that we’re not what maybe some people think in their head,’” he said.

### Starting to Prepare

If it comes to deportation, Lemus-Leon is uncertain what he might do. He has a few relatives in Mexico, none that he knows well. Most of his family – aunts, uncles and cousins – are in California, Arkansas and Delaware.

He is engaged to be married in October 2018. His fiancée is from Mexico and they have discussed his status. He said he has told her that Mexico is “not like we’re dying, it’s not like hell.”

That, he admits, is his optimism speaking, an attempt to minimize the situation.

# 65

65 percent of Americans (58 percent of Republicans, 77 percent of Democrats) say it is an important or top priority to pass a bill to protect DACA recipients from deportation. (Sept. 7-11 survey, Morning Consult.com)

# 72

72 percent of the top 25 Fortune 500 companies employ DACA recipients. (August 2017 survey by Tom K. Wong, University of California, San Diego)

# 97

97 percent of survey respondents are employed or enrolled in school. (August 2017 survey by Tom K. Wong, University of California, San Diego)

# 460

The Center for American Progress projects it will cost the U.S. GDP \$460 billion over 10 years if DACA recipients leave the workforce. (Reported by Arizona Central, Sept. 3, 2017)

# \$0

The amount of welfare and food stamp benefits DACA recipients are eligible to receive. (Reported by Arizona Central, Sept. 3, 2017)

“I know in certain parts of Mexico there is a lot of danger, and I haven’t been there since I was six,” he said. “I like to think my Spanish is good, and I’m bilingual but I know it isn’t as good as someone who has been born, raised and spent their whole life in Mexico.

“But I don’t know where we would live, don’t know if we would go back to my parents’ hometown where my grandma and grandpa still live,” he said. “It’s a really, really small ranch-style town. I could work the fields, or, I don’t know...”

“We’re starting to prepare for what that might be.”

### Opportunities, Obstacles

Some have told Lemus-Leon that his parents made a mistake by bringing him to the U.S. as a child.

“I don’t think so. They did what they thought was best at the time,” he said. “I don’t fault them, I thank them for what they’ve done because I don’t think I would have had this opportunity in my home country.”

Formal documentation, he says, likely would have changed his life course.

“I don’t know if I’d be where I’m at today if I would have had documentation,” he said.

“If I would not have had those obstacles, would I be a school counselor? I don’t know. I like to think of those obstacles as opportunities, and that is what I try to tell our students,” he said.

Lemus-Leon shares that he has no problem showing emotion, no problem crying.

“But when we’re done crying, what are we going to do? What’s our plan?” he said.

### DACA Temporary, a Band-Aid

He says his tears do not flow because he worries about the future.

“The part that bugs me is knowing how much I’ve fallen in love with this place, the kids...and not being able to continue that,” he said.

“They’ll get a new school counselor and will be fine. These five years have been great, I’ve found somebody I really love...”

What is the best possible outcome? Lemus-Leon said congressional action that institutes the Dream Act, or something similar that will offer a pathway to citizenship for DACA youth.

“DACA has been great, but we knew it was temporary, a Band-Aid over a bigger issue,” he said.

Most DACA youth, he believes, would readily pay a fine or a fee.

“If I could continue to prove that I am just as American as anybody else...”

“In my opinion, what that means is the core values, and being an honest, good person, paying your taxes, following the law, contributing to society, helping the community to become better...”

“If there was a way for me to continue to prove that, and then over time, if over time, I am able to apply for residency, and then eventually citizenship... That would be the dream, right? Because it’s the DREAM Act.”

"I knew you all were amazing, but to get everything to fit so perfectly is beyond amazing! The designs, look and colors are wonderful—the students love how the costumes enhance the performances."

>Kaitlyn Clark  
Musical director, Gothenburg Public Schools



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# NSEA Understands Duty-Free Lunch Details

## Rules, Statutes, Policy: NSEA Can Assist

Teachers know that there is a constant flow of colleagues through the profession. Veteran teachers retire and young fresh-out-of-college teachers fill the void.

That coming and going sometimes leaves a void in institutional knowledge – it takes time for new teachers to get up to speed on rules, regulations and policy. To be honest, sometimes the veterans have a hard time keeping pace with changes in the profession.

Consider, for instance, this question that came through NSEA's website from an Association member:

**Q: "In the past, teachers have talked about how their school district has to provide a half hour, uninterrupted lunch period for certified staff. Is this true? If so, where is this regulation found?"**

**A: Yes, school districts must provide 30 minutes of uninterrupted lunch time for teachers. That time is not guaranteed by policy, but rather by state statute. That statute is courtesy of the hard work of your Association, which encouraged introduction and passage of legislation that provided the duty-free lunch period for educators. Your NSEA organizational specialist can answer**



*more questions about that issue.*

When it comes to questions about dealing with parents, dealing with classroom management, working with administration or other issues that can make your school year operate more smoothly, call NSEA.

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

As they did with this question, NSEA's organizational specialists can assist you in answering routine questions. They can also assist in diffusing difficult situations, offering solutions and getting you back to what you do best: teach.

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

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

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

## Children's Fund Helps Kids in Need

For nearly a quarter century, the NSEA Children's Fund has made a wonderful difference for children in poverty or for children facing devastating loss.

When an NSEA member sees a child in need of a warm coat, eyeglasses or other basic necessities, all they need do is call NSEA and ask for the Children's Fund.

Since 1994, donations to the Children's Fund have provided such assistance, with thousands of dollars sent to help children in need. In the last two years, the Fund has provided nearly \$100,000 in relief.

On the other side of the ledger, local asso-

ciations are encouraged to brainstorm fundraising ideas: collect change; host a jeans day fundraiser; or consider other ideas to raise funds on behalf of the Children's Fund. The Children's Fund is financed entirely through donations; NSEA picks up all administrative expenses and costs.

To make donations easier, the Fund is set up to accept donations through PayPal. Find the link at:

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

For details, call Sally Bodtke at NSEA at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

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



## BCBS Telehealth: Quick, Easy, Convenient

### Served by Nebraska Physicians

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska (BCBSNE) believes in the importance of providing options to help you access affordable and immediate health care. That is why the Educators Health Alliance offers telehealth to NSEA members with the BCBSNE plan.

Telehealth is an innovative patient consultation service that lets you connect with a U.S. board-certified, licensed and credentialed doctor using your computer, tablet or telephone.

It's easy to use, affordable, private and secure. Rather than having to schedule a doctor's appointment and travel to and from the doctor's office, telehealth lets you interact with a doctor at your convenience for common conditions such as sinus, cold, flu, fever, rash, ear infection, migraines and the like.

BCBSNE provides telehealth service through Amwell, an in-



dusty leader in telehealth solutions. With Amwell, you can register for free, and the cost per visit is less than the cost of an in-person doctor office visit. Amwell offers these features:

- Your choice of a trusted, board-certified, Nebraska doctor.
- Access to a licensed physician via computer, tablet or phone.
- Consultations for common issues, including e-prescriptions to your pharmacy of choice, when appropriate and where allowed.

Telehealth can be used day or night. It's perfect when your doctor's office is closed, you're too sick or busy to see someone in person, or when you're traveling. There are three ways to register:

- Download the Amwell app on your mobile device from the Apple App Store or Google Play.
- Visit [nebraskablue.com/telehealth](http://nebraskablue.com/telehealth).
- Call toll-free 1-844-733-3627. When prompted, enter Service Key BCBSNE to get the NSEA member rate.



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Contact us today by calling the **NEA Home Financing Program** at **1-800-541-2105** or visit us online at [www.neamb.com/hf](http://www.neamb.com/hf)



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2. Eligible individuals can receive the Wells Fargo **My Mortgage Gift**<sup>SM</sup> award approximately 6 weeks after closing on a new purchase or refinance loan secured by an eligible first mortgage or deed of trust with Wells Fargo Home Mortgage ("New Loan"), subject to qualification, approval and closing, when identifying themselves as eligible. The **My Mortgage Gift**<sup>SM</sup> award is not available with The Relocation Mortgage Program<sup>®</sup> or to any Wells Fargo team member. Only one **My Mortgage Gift**<sup>SM</sup> award is permitted per eligible New Loan. This award cannot be combined with any other award, discount or rebate, except for **yourFirst Mortgage**<sup>SM</sup>. This award is void where prohibited, transferable, and subject to change or cancellation with no prior notice. Awards may constitute taxable income. Federal, state and local taxes, and any use of the award not otherwise specified in the Terms and Conditions (available at [wellsfargo.com/mmgterms](http://wellsfargo.com/mmgterms) and provided at receipt of award) are the sole responsibility of the **My Mortgage Gift**<sup>SM</sup> recipient.

Wells Fargo Home Mortgage has a services agreement with NEA's Member Benefit Corporation in which NEA's Member Benefit Corporation receives a financial benefit for providing agreed upon services. You are encouraged to shop around to ensure you are receiving the services and loan terms that fit your home financing needs.

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## Save With NEAMB

NEA Member Benefits is right on top of money-saving programs that will help you stretch your hard-earned cash.

Using these programs and offerings can save you far more than the cost of membership, particularly if you use them on a regular basis. Consider these ideas for saving money:

■ **Teacher Discounts:** Get up to 25 percent off at Barnes and Noble; save 15 percent on classroom supplies; save cash on movie tickets and more at:

[neamb.com/teacher-save](http://neamb.com/teacher-save)

■ **Save More Money All Year Long:** Save every month through NEA Member Benefits. In fact, you can save more than \$1,000 each year through this plan. Go to:

[neamb.com/year-round-savings](http://neamb.com/year-round-savings)

■ **Dine Out on a Dime:** Eating out can be pricey – unless you use rewards programs available through the NEA Member Benefits plan. Learn more at:

[neamb.com/dine-out](http://neamb.com/dine-out)

■ **Earn Rewards with Every Purchase:** Choose a credit card that gives back with the NEA Cash Rewards Card. Find details at:

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Now is a great time to get good deals on end-of-model-year cars. If you're in the market, the NEA Auto Buying Program is the first place to look! NEA members and their families enjoy preferred pricing year-round, save an average of \$3,000 off MSRP on new cars, plus get these benefits:

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■ **Hassle-Free Experience:** Bring in your Price Certificate to a Certified Dealer or show it on your mobile phone.

Visit the NEA Auto Buying Program to see how much you can save! Go to:

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# Take Steps to Shield Your ID from the Equifax Breach

## Vigilance, Alerts Provide Some Security

Equifax last month announced that cybercriminals exploited a vulnerability in their website, allowing them to gain access to certain files. The data breach appears to have taken place from mid-May through July 2017. The company discovered the unauthorized access on July 29 of this year.

Cybercriminals stole names, Social Security numbers, birth dates and addresses. In some cases, driver's license numbers and even credit card numbers were accessed.

How do you know if you have been involved in a data breach?

If you hear about a breach involving an institution you do business with, contact the organization in question to check whether your data has been compromised. You can visit the organization's website to see if there is a statement about the breach with any instructions about what to do next, or you can call the company's customer service phone number.

You may not know if you have been hit by a breach, so your best action is to be proactive. You can use these tips to stay ahead of bad guys and know what to watch for.

■ Routinely monitor all of your financial accounts for suspicious activities, such as transactions you did not make. If your institution offers account activity alerts via text or email, sign up for them.

■ Cybercriminals can now use this in-

formation to access other online accounts you may have via password reset questions. These questions usually ask you personal information about yourself such as a parent's maiden name, previous addresses and other details. If you have used any of this data in those security questions, you should change those questions immediately.

■ If the information that was leaked had a Social Security number or other personally identifiable details, you may want to consider putting a security freeze on your credit report. This will prevent other institutions from accessing your report entirely, which will prevent opening any new credit lines or credit extensions under your name. Also be sure to contact the Social Security Administration about next steps if you're dealing with a data breach that involves your SSN.

■ If you do find suspicious activity on your account, contact your bank immediately and inform them of the activity as well as the fact that your information was exposed. Also contact the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) and file a report.

■ If a password was involved in the breach, change it.

These are just a few of the precautions you can take to protect against identity theft.

As an NEA member, you have access to the NEA Identity Theft Protection Program powered by LifeLock. NEA members receive 30 days of LifeLock identity theft protection at no-cost and 10 percent off LifeLock membership.

# Protect Against Social Security Fraud With an Online Account

By Miriam Cross

The Social Security Administration is adding an extra layer of protection to online accounts.

Anyone signing in to an online Social Security account, or signing up for the first time, must provide either a cell-phone number or an e-mail address to receive a unique, one-time code by text or e-mail. The Social Security Administration rolled out a similar two-step process in 2016, but it restricted the extra layer of protection to text message only.

It's smart to set up an online account even if you're years from retirement. Once you've done so, identity thieves will be unable to create a fraudulent account in your name and use it to apply for benefits. In ad-

dition, you can check your earnings history against your W-2 forms or tax returns to make sure there are no gaps in your earnings record that could reduce your Social Security benefits. You can also look up estimated retirement, disability and survivor benefits and, in certain cases, request a replacement Social Security card.

To set up an account, go to [www.ssa.gov/myaccount](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount). You'll need to enter some personal details, answer questions to confirm your identity, and choose a unique username and a complex password.

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## Reinventing Our Schools



**Executive Director  
Maddie Fennell**

“

*Changing our education system is a Herculean task, but public education is the bedrock of our democracy. Will we wallow in the swamp or will we find dry ground and reinvent?*

”

In 2006 I read a Time Magazine article that described how Rip Van Winkle could have fallen asleep 100 years ago, woken today, and been stymied by huge changes in our society – while schools and classrooms would still look the same.

Kids have changed, technology has transformed our society, our economy is global and yet, in many schools, you will still see rows of desks with students learning in pretty traditional modes. Most schools have computers (or at least teacher access to a computer) but haven't yet learned how to fully utilize these as tools of instruction.

Rather than rolling up our sleeves and collaborating for change, factions take to finger pointing. Blame the teachers' union; cell phones; Common Core; teachers; colleges of education; administrators; politicians; Betsy DeVos; and on and on.

I always admonished my students “When you point your finger at someone else, you have three fingers pointing back at YOU!” (I know, you're moving your digits right now to see whether I'm right.)

### **‘Swamp Thinking’**

Blaming isn't going to get us there. I recently had the opportunity to learn from Ann Overton of Mastery Foundation and Allan Cohen of Strategy Consulting. They would call that “Swamp Thinking.” It's that dangerous place where we kind of wallow in complaining, accusing and lamenting how bad things are.

It's time for those talking about education to move out of the swamp and onto dry ground (where we can begin to agree on facts). I would offer the following as items that I think we can agree on:

- Our education system has not kept pace with other changes in our society.
- Our students need, and deserve, a strong education that will prepare them for a changing world.
- Americans have the intellectual capacity to develop a better education system.
- If our education system fails, so will our economy.

Notice that I started with the system. We can't keep blaming individual elements and not acknowledge that our system resembles a spider web: you can't pull one thread without impacting the rest of the web.

In July Secretary DeVos accused education unions of being “defenders of the status quo” that care only about “school systems” and not about individual children. I would argue that if you care about kids,

you must care about the system. Dysfunctional systems won't allow our kids to actualize their potential and they demoralize and destroy good educators.

Here's kind of a tough analogy: a woman is walking along a stream and sees a baby struggling in the water. She runs in, saves the child and then sees more kids floating toward her. Heroically, she continues to save as many children as she can. In the back of her mind she's wondering “How is this happening? How are these kids getting in the water?” but she is so consumed saving those right in front of her that she doesn't have time to find the source.

I want to posit that in the case of education, the source of our problems is the system itself. The inter-tangled web of stakeholders, resources, student needs, and our changing world must be addressed cohesively, not piecemeal.

### **Support for You**

While this task looks overwhelming, there are folks out there who are already working on solutions. I know that we have educators right here in Nebraska who have great ideas to change education.

NSEA wants to support YOUR innovative idea at the Powered by Teach to Lead Teacher Leadership Summit in Kearney on Saturday, Dec. 2. Start with an idea that might strengthen or improve your classroom, school building, school district or even public education on a statewide basis. Submit your idea to NSEA no later than Sunday, Oct. 15, at this website:

<http://bit.ly/NE-LEARN>

Teachers will score the ideas for their potential impact and 20 teams will be chosen to join us in Kearney.

Your team of up to five stakeholders (at least one of whom must be an active teacher) will spend the day working with a critical friend (someone who can help you dive deeper) to strategically plan your move from idea to action. LEARN – NSEA's new 501c3 – will cover costs of team travel, food and hotel (for those traveling more than two hours). It will be a day of intense work, guided by national trainers from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, that is focused on DOING and not on “sit and get.”

Changing our education system is a Herculean task, but public education is the bedrock of our democracy. Will we wallow in the swamp or will we find dry ground and reinvent?

“If it is important to you, you will find a way. If not, you will find an excuse.”

**LEARN**  
Leading Excellence  
And Robust Networks  
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**Start Dreaming!**  
Apply for the Dec. 2 Teach to Lead Summit no later than Sunday, Oct. 15, at:  
<http://bit.ly/NE-LEARN>

Review leadership plans from past national summits at:  
<http://bit.ly/TTLPlans>

## Fall Conference, Insurance Seminars Ahead

### U.S. Stamp Stories, NSEA History on Agenda; Medicare, EHA on Tap

Many members have already made reservations, but there is still plenty of time to meet the Tuesday, Oct. 17 registration deadline. It will be well worth your time!

Among topics on the agenda will be goal setting, better body balance, driving safely, scam and fraud alerts, and speed traveling!

Past NSEA Executive Director Dr. Craig R. Christiansen will report on NSEA's first 150 years, and Humanities Nebraska presenter Bob Ferguson will report on U.S. history through postage stamps.

Morning refreshments and lunch are free to members and additional guest registration is \$10 per guest. Afternoon dessert and prizes end the afternoon.

The conference will be held at the Leadership Center on the east side of Aurora, just north of Highway 34. The conference opens at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 24. To register, or for details, reach Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

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

You may also make reservations at:

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

Also: join Monday, Oct. 23, for a 7 p.m. campfire, s'mores and conversation.

### Panhandle Annual Picnic

The Panhandle Education Association-Retired and the Scottsbluff Association of Retired Personnel met in Scottsbluff on Aug. 28 to start the year at an annual picnic. Scottsbluff Retired President Twila

Griffiths introduced NSEA-Retired President De Tonack, who urged members to be involved in the CORE effort (Call on Retired Educators). CORE assists with professional needs such as mentoring new educators and aspiring educators who are members of SEAN; making legislative contacts; and assisting NSEA in member activities.

The Panhandle group meets at a Runza that serves as a safe house for young people facing various challenges. The retirees have made donations to Runza for this effort. The picnic was at the home of Bob and Dorothy Krantz. Dorothy just retired 40 years as a school bus driver.

### Insurance Seminars Planned

In November, NSEA-Retired and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska will hold seminars on Medicare and insurance options available to retirees younger than 65.

At each location the seminar will have two parts. Morning sessions (from 9:30-11 a.m.) will cover Medicare. Afternoon sessions (1:30-3:30 p.m.) will cover the EHA early-retiree insurance options.

Registration and more details are found on the website at:

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

Sites include:

**Monday, Nov. 6:** Omaha at the Culinary Arts Institute at Metropolitan Community College's Fort Omaha campus, Building 22, ICA Room 201A, 5370 N 30th St.

**Tuesday, Nov. 7:** Kearney Holiday Inn, 110 S. 2nd Ave.



**Comfy Quilt:** NSEA-Retired quilt winner Janice Cerny purchased six raffle tickets at the fall NSEA-Retired conference last year and won the quilt pictured. Raffle proceeds benefited the NSEA Children's Fund. Cerny was a paraprofessional at Ogallala Elementary, many of those years at the library. The quilt was made and donated by NSEA Organizational Specialist Michelle Raphael.

**Wednesday, Nov. 8:** Southeast Community College, Lincoln, 8800 'O' St.

**Friday, Nov. 10:** Norfolk's NECC Lifelong Learning Center, 801 E. Benjamin Ave.

— De Tonack

— President, NSEA-Retired



**Lincoln Awards Scholarships:** Two teachers-to-be earned \$1,000 scholarships from the Lincoln Education Association-Retired this summer. The scholarships are to be used during their student teaching semester. From left are LEA-R Scholarship Co-chair Mary Lou Sandell, recipients Kathryn Belt and Alyssa Rosenlof, Scholarship Co-chair Barb Hetcko, and Union Bank's Tammy Gebers. Over the years, Union Bank has consistently provided one of the scholarships. Belt graduated from Lincoln Southwest and is pursuing an endorsement in early childhood and special education. Rosenlof graduated from Lincoln Northeast and is pursuing an endorsement in elementary education and special education mild/moderate disabilities. LEA-R typically grants four scholarships, but this year gave \$2,000 to the NSEA Children's Fund.

## State Board Grants will Fund Early Childhood Gains at 11 Sites

The Nebraska State Board of Education has voted to approve 11 new and expansion Early Childhood Education Program grants that will provide access to high-quality early childhood education for approximately 270 at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds during the 2017-18 school year. Several of the schools received grants to provide full-day care, which is important for families with both parents working.

Funded programs receive grants up to one-half of their total operating budget per year; each district receiving funding is required to operate in compliance with Rule 11 Regulations, which utilize research-based elements to produce strong outcomes for children.

These school districts were awarded grants for the 2017-18 school year:

- Crete Public Schools, \$75,000 for one part-day classroom serving 16 children.
- Nebraska Unified District No. 1 (Clearwater-Orchard-Verdigre), \$75,000 for one part-day classroom serving 11 children.

- Dorchester Public Schools, \$100,000 for two part-day classrooms for 40 children.

- Palmyra District OR 1, \$42,784 for one part-day classroom serving 20 children.

- Fremont Public Schools, \$66,018 for two part-day classrooms for 30 children.

- Papillion-LaVista Public Schools, \$50,000 for one full day classroom serving 15 children.

- Gothenburg Public Schools, \$75,000 for one full-day classroom for 18 children.

- Southwest Public Schools, \$18,096 for one part-day classroom for 20 children.

- High Plains Community Schools, \$75,000 for two part-day classrooms serving 40 children.

- Westside Community Schools, \$125,000 for two part-day classrooms for 40 children.

- Lincoln Public Schools, \$130,000 for one full-day classroom serving 20 children.

## NPPD Pathway Targets STEM Work

Nebraska Public Power District has launched the Pathways to a Technical Future initiative.

Pathways allows students to achieve knowledge, practical skills, expertise, and literacies that will equip them to be successful in the emerging STEM workforce through experiences tied to academic requirements.

The program is built upon a guiding spectrum that correlates “Open Source” learning with business fundamentals and educational strategies. “Open Source” is an emerging education practice that allows students to capitalize on the scope and power of the Internet.

Specific public power content is integrated within the projects and resources at each of six stages.

Pathways establishes a framework by which teachers can provide opportunities for student development through innovation. Taking advantage of established “open source” movements, advances in innovation tools, and utilizing local business resources

(such as public power utilities), educators can facilitate a holistic approach to teaching.

The Pathways program integrates local business and education through technology and student-led activities. The program implementation includes four key components: teacher professional development opportunities; online Learning Object Repository; STEM Connections Lab (portable makerspace for schools to check out); local partnerships.

Teacher development includes opportunities to learn how to use the Pathways program in their classrooms, as well as discovery time with equipment and resources.

The resources include all the lessons, activities, presentations, videos, and career connections. The STEM Lab provides schools access to tools and equipment designed to encourage a student focused maker’s mentality. Local partnerships which will promote student innovation are essential in the long-term sustainability of the program.

For details, visit:

[pathways.nppd.com/p2020](http://pathways.nppd.com/p2020)

## Have Your Contact Details Changed?

Have you moved? Have you changed your name by marriage?

If so, you can update your NSEA membership information online.

How? Log on to the NSEA website and click on the ‘Member Info’ button on the left side of the screen. Then click on the ‘For Members’ link and look for the ‘Member Update’ icon in the center of the next screen, and follow directions. Keep your issue of *The Voice* near, as above your name on the mailing label is your 10-digit membership number, used to access your information. The NSEA website is at:

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

## Social Security Number Obsolete on NSEA Forms

Your cell phone company likely has your Social Security number.

Your cable company probably has your Social Security number.

But starting last May, NSEA no longer requires your Social Security number for membership enrollment.

The National Education Association for many years required Social Security numbers on membership forms. That practice has ended, said NSEA Comptroller Sheri Jablonski.

“You will be asked only for the last four digits of your Social Security number, not all nine digits. We no longer have Social Security numbers on our membership forms,” said Jablonski.

NSEA has for many years assigned each member a unique, permanent 10-digit membership number for identification purposes within the membership database. Your ID number appears above your name on the mailing label of *The Voice*.

## Read Across is 20! Order Materials Now

NSEA members can find details about the 2017-18 Read Across America celebration scheduled for Friday, March 2, AND can order FREE Read Across America calendars and other materials at the link below.

Read Across America – now in its 20th year – celebrates reading each year on the birthday of the incomparable Dr. Seuss! Calendars, posters, hats and more are available at the NEA website. Postage for the calendars will be about \$2.50. For more details, go to the website at:

[www.nea.org/grants/886.htm](http://www.nea.org/grants/886.htm)

## SCC Lincoln Seeks Volunteer Assistants

The Southeast Community College Lincoln Campus Adult Education program is seeking volunteers to assist instructors.

The program gives classes to adult learners to increase their math, reading and writing skills for employment purposes, for secondary education, for English as a Second Language classes, or for GED credentials.

To volunteer, reach Vickie Carper at 402-437-2666, or via email at:

[vcarper@southeast.edu](mailto:vcarper@southeast.edu)

# Take Action!

## Your NSEA Membership Includes Life Insurance; Take Full Advantage

There are many, many benefits to joining your professional association, but perhaps the most overlooked and underappreciated benefit may be the life insurance plans that come your way courtesy of your NSEA membership.

Your membership includes a free NEA Complimentary Life Insurance policy as well as the no-cost NEA Introductory Term Life Insurance policy available to brand new members.

It is important to note that all members should register a beneficiary for the Complimentary Life Insurance policy.

The NEA Complimentary Life Insurance is part of membership at no cost to Active, Reserve and Lifetime NEA members. All eligible members can take advantage of:

- Up to \$1,000 in life insurance.
- Up to \$5,000 in regular accidental death/dismemberment coverage.
- Up to \$50,000 in accidental death and dismemberment insurance for any covered accident that occurs while on the job or serving as an Association leader.
- Up to \$150,000 in accidental death benefits for eligible members who are victims of death by homicide while at work.

All members should register a beneficiary at:

[neamb.com/teachers-insurance](http://neamb.com/teachers-insurance)

At no cost, the NEA Introductory Term Life plan is offered to new Association members only:

- For 12 months, eligible new Association members are given complimentary \$15,000 of term life.
- After the complimentary period, members may continue coverage at members-only rates.
- No evidence of insurability is required for the first six months.

For details, visit:

[neamb.com/teachers-insurance](http://neamb.com/teachers-insurance)

## Speaking of Education

“An understanding heart is everything in a teacher, and cannot be esteemed highly enough. One looks with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.”

— *Carl Jung, Psychologist*  
1875-1961

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

## Celebrate Reading with the Cat

From Lynn Cashell, a teacher in Pennsylvania:

“To celebrate Dr. Seuss’s birthday (March 2), we have a week-long celebration, beginning with dressing like our favorite storybook characters. The principal and assistant principal dress up like Seuss characters and read to different classrooms. We have mystery teachers who switch places and read to each other’s classes. I always invite our math supervisor to read a math-related book to my math class. Since we are so close to Philadelphia, we are fortunate enough to have professional sports players accept our invitation to read to our students. That is always a thrill! We also host a Principal’s Night at a local bookstore. Teachers are on hand to read, and proceeds from sales support our library.

“To cap off the week, we have a ‘Crazy Hair, Crazy Hat Day.’ Those who come up with a Seuss-inspired hat or hair-do can win a prize. Some teachers have their students bring in blankets, pillows, and stuffed animals, and they spend the day reading in comfort. Each morning during announcements, there is a Seuss trivia question, and the class who responds first via email wins a prize. My students race to my stack of Seuss books looking for the answers. I put the books out the week before, so they can read ahead and enjoy books they have not read for years. Our fifth-grade classes read to their first-grade buddies. We look forward to the Cat coming back each year!”

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



## Raymond Central Strong!

These five members of the Raymond Central Education Association display their NSEA membership cards on the final day in August before students arrive. They teach at the school district’s elementary building at Ceresco. From left are Meredith Hoxmeier, Nikole Farr, Heather Bohac, Kim Hudson and Laci Pebley.

Snap a photo of yourself and fellow members holding your NSEA room cards and send the photo to NSEA at [al.koontz@nea.org](mailto:al.koontz@nea.org) to see yourself in print!