

# No Substitute for NSEA membership

Former AAE member learns the true value of NSEA membership.

When cheap dues cost her time and money, Elba teacher Donna Wratten turned to NSEA for help and learned the true value of membership.

Wratten admits when she returned to teaching, she never gave joining the NSEA much consideration.

“I just thought, ‘why do I need liability insurance?’ I come to school, I teach, and I was getting along with the students, so I just didn’t sign up,” Wratten said. When the interim principal handed her an unfair evaluation she needed help.

Promotional materials provided by the Association of American Educators (AAE) touted similar benefits to NSEA but with a smaller price tag. Wratten called AAE and after a brief conversation with a representative about her situation she joined. Only after she joined did Wratten realize the benefits and level of service provided by AAE fell far short.

Slow help was no help for Wratten as she worked to fight the evaluation on her own. The case, Wratten was told, was still being reviewed and so she waited – and waited. An AAE representative eventually explained to Wratten that they were having trouble finding an attorney in her area.



Elba Education Association member Donna Wratten learned the true cost of AAE’s “cheap” dues: A lack of support and guidance.

Additionally, Wratten was told she wouldn’t qualify for the AAE liability coverage for this matter.

When Wratten joined NSEA she said the difference in the level of advocacy skills, knowledge of Nebraska’s school laws, and responsiveness was immediately apparent.

“I feel like the support I’m getting now from NSEA is the support I should have been getting all along,” Wratten said. “I did not get this support from AAE.”

## 20 Questions about Teachers’ Organizations

These questions should be asked of any professional teachers’ organizations you might consider joining!

### BARGAINING & MEMBER RIGHTS

1. How many contracts for salary and benefits has your organization negotiated in Nebraska?
2. How many teachers have you represented before any Nebraska school board in the last year?
3. Does your group believe in the rights of educators to bargain for better schools and benefits?
4. Does your organization believe in academic freedom at the college and university level?

### ORGANIZATION & STAFF

5. How many staff members do you employ locally to assist members in my school district and to deal with my school board or administrator?
6. In addition to members’ dues, does your group receive funding from any other organization?

7. Do members have a voice in your association?
8. How many of your leaders teach in public schools; in private schools; how many are retired?
9. Where is your state office located; how many staff work there; do you have an office in our area?

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10. What do you offer to help me become a better teacher – workshops, conferences, publications?
11. Do minorities and women have equal opportunities to serve as leaders in your organization?
12. How many members do you have in Nebraska?

### INSURANCE & LEGAL PROTECTION

13. How many Nebraska attorneys are retained exclusively for members?

14. Does your liability insurance pay if you are found guilty — or only if you are found innocent?
15. If the school board tries to fire me, do I have to get my own lawyer and be reinstated before you pay my legal fees?

### POLITICAL ACTION

16. What bills have you successfully lobbied in the Nebraska Legislature or Congress in the past five years?
17. How many friends of public education has your group helped elect to office?
18. How are the leaders of your organization selected?
19. Does your group have full-time lobbyists in Lincoln every day when the legislature meets?
20. Do you attend all of the Nebraska State Board of Education meetings?