



Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

Member Update

May 7, 2026

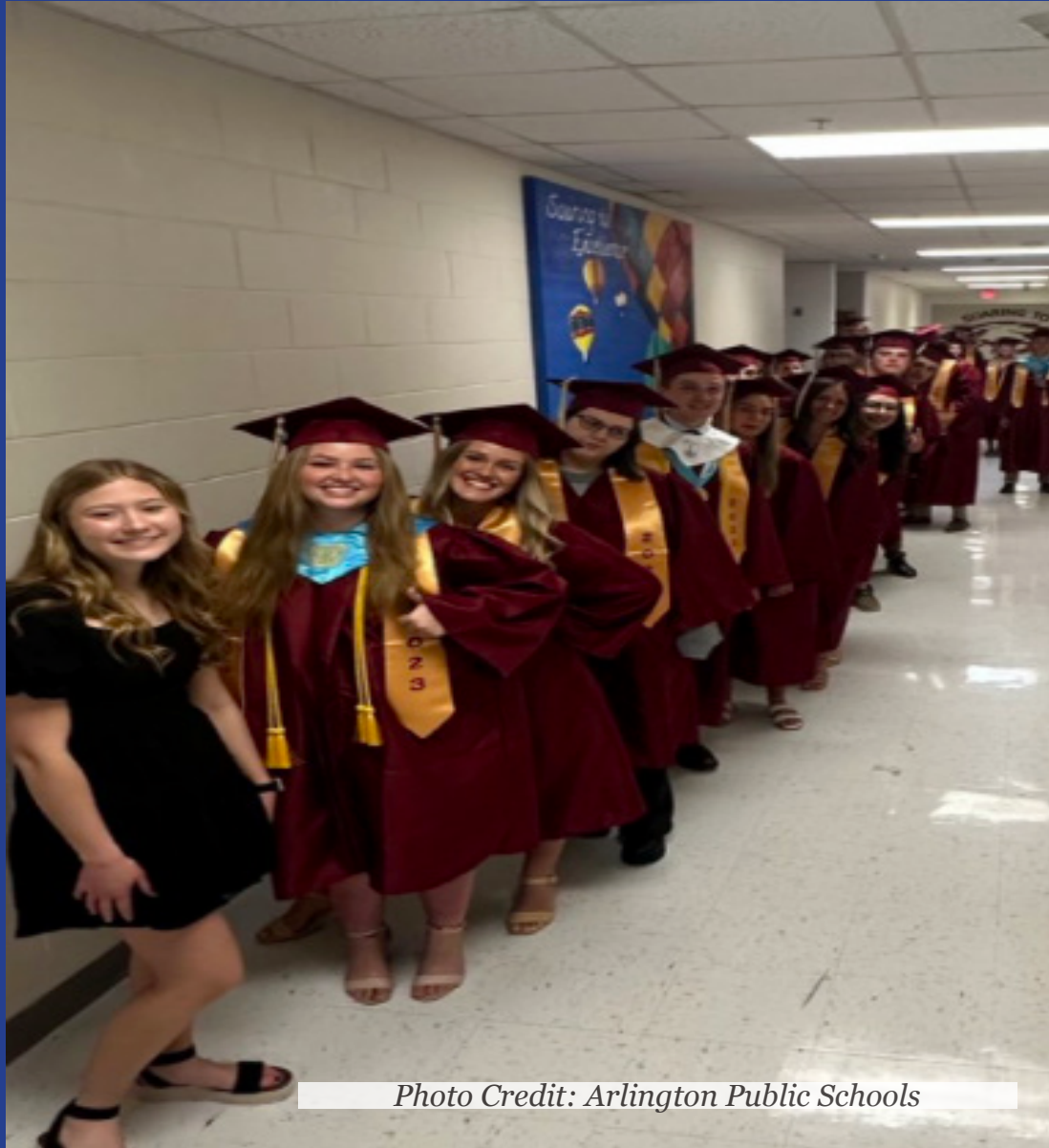


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NRCSA Calendar



NRCSA Events

NRCSA Golf Tournament

July 28, 2026

Meadowlark Hills Golf Course in Kearney

[More about this event](#)

NRCSA Superintendent Lunch

July 29, 2026

12:00 PM

Holiday Inn in Kearney

NRCSA Legislative Forum

February 24, 2027

Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln

[More about this event](#)

NRCSA Spring Conference

April 1 & 2, 2027

Crowne Plaza & Younes North Convention Center in

Kearney

[More about this event](#)

Committee Meetings

NRCSA Executive Committee

June 17, 2026

10:00 AM Mountain Time

Ogallala Public Schools

NRCSA Consultant Meeting

June 17-18, 2026

Kearney, NE(Time & Location TBD)

2026-27 NRCSA Executive Committee

July 29, 2026

1:00 PM

Holiday Inn in Kearney

NRCSA Search Service



Please let Jack Moles know where superintendent vacancies occur, so that NRCSA Superintendent Search can make direct contact. We need to hear as soon as possible in anticipation of getting promotional materials specific to that board of education ready. It is critical that Board Presidents have the NRCSA contact information so that if they choose to consider a Superintendent Search Service, NRCSA is one they hopefully will consider.



Axtell Community Schools
Search Complete



Potter-Dix Public Schools
Search Complete



Bancroft-Rosalie Community Schools
Search Complete



Red Cloud Community Schools
Interim Search Complete



Blue Hill Community Schools
Interim Search Complete



Sandy Creek Public Schools
Search Complete



Hampton Public Schools
Search Complete



Superior Public Schools
Search Complete



Hayes Center Public Schools
Search Complete



Newman Grove Public Schools
Search Complete

Other Vacancies

Thayer Central Community Schools

Elementary Principal (PK–6) – Interim or Permanent

Location: Hebron, Nebraska

Position Type: Full-Time (1-Year Interim or Permanent Contract Available)

Start Date: July 1, 2026 (flexible based on candidate availability)

Application Deadline: Open Until Filled

Job Description: Due to Professional advancement Thayer Central Community Schools is seeking a highly effective educational leader to serve as Elementary Principal. Because of the timing of this vacancy, the district is open to both interim (one-year) and permanent candidates, with a preference for individuals who can step into the role quickly and provide immediate leadership and stability. This position requires a leader who can balance instructional leadership, staff development, and building operations while fostering a positive school culture focused on student success.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities:

- Provide day-to-day leadership and management of the elementary building
- Lead instructional practices and support student achievement
- Supervise and evaluate staff while maintaining a positive, collaborative culture
- Ensure effective school operations and communication with stakeholders
- Collaborate with district leadership on student services and interventions
- Maintain compliance with all state and federal requirements
- Serve as a visible leader in the community, regularly attending and supporting school activities and community events as an essential component of the role

Qualifications:

- Valid Nebraska Administrative Certificate (or ability to obtain)
- Master's degree in Educational Administration or related field
- Successful teaching experience required
- Strong communication, organizational, and leadership skills

Preferred Qualifications::

- Background in elementary education and instructional leadership
- Experience in rural school settings
- Ability to step into the role with minimal onboarding

Salary/Benefits:

Competitive salary based on experience. Full benefits package available.

Application Instructions:

Submit the following materials via email:

- Letter of interest (please indicate interim or permanent preference)
- Resume
- Copy of Admin Certificate or Credentials
- At least 3 professional references

Contact Information:

Eric Miller, Superintendent

Thayer Central Community Schools

Email: eric.miller@thayercentral.net

Phone: 402-768-6117

Access the Members area of www.nrcsa.net anytime.

Login: member Password: learning

NRCSA Updates

As the school year winds down, please check out this release on a senior prank at Valentine. Well done by everyone involved!

[Valentine Twitter Video](#)

Also, as we close out the school year, please remember that this is Teacher Appreciation Week. A message on X from NDE says, “The knowledge & skills educators impart to their students are what drive future success & our future society. From the 1st day of kindergarten to graduation, education remains one of the most powerful forces shaping opportunity. Thank a teacher today!

I have closed the NRCSA Spring Conference the past few years by challenging those in attendance to do two things: (1) go back to your district and thank one of the teachers on your staff for the impact they are having on kids, and (2) make contact with a teacher from your past who made a difference in YOUR life and tell him/her thank you. I encourage all who are reading this to take such actions this week. Thanks in advance for doing this!



There were a few NRCSA leadership spots available for the 2026-27 school year. President Elect and the North Central District Representative to the Executive Committee were open. Ballots were sent via email on April 2, 2026.

PRESIDENT ELECT—this position is part of a three year Presidency cycle (President-Elect, President, Past-President). This is a state-wide election with each member entity having one vote. Michael Eldridge, Supt. at East Butler and Dale Hafer, Supt. at Ainsworth were the two candidates. Dale Hafer was elected President-Elect.

NRCSA Leadership

Chris Kuncl, President.
Mullen Public Schools

Dr. Heather Nebesniak, Past Pres.
Ord Public Schools

Stephanie Kaczor, Pres-Elect.
Riverside Public Schools

Jeremy Braden, Secretary.
Doniphan-Trumbull Public Schs

District Representatives:

Ginger Meyer, West
Chadron Public Schools

Dale Hafer, North Central
Ainsworth Community Schools

Daryl Schrunk, Northeast
Randolph Public Schools

Andrew Havelka, Southeast
Freeman Public Schools

Jon Davis, South Central
Alma Public Schools

Jane Davis, Southwest
Hershey Public Schools

Executive Director:

Jack Moles

Lobbyists:

Jon Edwards
Scott Moore
Russell Westerhold

Legislative Co- Chairs:

Dr. Jason Dolliver
Pender Public Schools

Bryce Jorgenson
Southern Valley Schools

Scholarship & Recognition Co Chairs:

Jessica Bland,
Oakland-Craig Public Schools

Jim Widdifield
Minden Public Schools

NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE—Current North Central District rep Dale Hafer is term-limited, thus the position would be open. The position has a term of three years, with the ability to run for a second term. This position was voted on by member entities in the North Central District. Heather Nebesniak, Supt. at Ord, was the lone candidate and was elected as the North Central District Representative.

There are a few open spots on NRCSA’s committees. Executive Director Jack Moles will make recommendations to the Executive Committee for new members on committees.

NRCSA has partnered with the Holocaust Learning Experience to provide free curriculum for the teaching of the Holocaust and other genocides. LB888, which was adopted into law in 2022, requires school districts to teach about the Holocaust and other forms of genocide. This has been a growing move in many states. The Holocaust Learning Experience, based out of Florida, developed FREE on-line curriculum, which features interviews with survivors of the Holocaust, for Florida school districts.. The lessons are tiered for 5th and 6th grades, 7th and 8th grades, and high school grades. The group has now made it possible for schools in other states to access the materials for the same price: FREE!.

[Impactful Lessons from the Holocaust | The Holocaust Learning Experience](#)

[Holocaust Learning Experience | Empowering Classrooms to Combat Hate](#)

[Heroes of the Holocaust Demo with Hal_07072025.mov](#)

The NRCSA Spring Conference was another success! The conference, which was held at the Younes Conference Center North in Kearney on March 19 & 20, brought together Board members and administrators to reconnect and refresh. The free pre-conference, courtesy of Franklin-Covey, provided NRCSA members with the access to a very valuable experience, centered around the work of Steven Covey. In addition to 35 high-quality breakout sessions of importance to rural education, we also hosted two featured speakers: Adrienne Bulinski and Michelle Oberg. Also in attendance was Dr. Melissa Sadorf, Executive Director of the National Rural Education Association. And, of course, everyone was well fed!



MELISSA OBERG



JACK MOLES WITH NREA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MELISSA SADORF



COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION, DR. BRIAN MAHER

Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

We continue to celebrate our 2026 NRCSA Award winners! They are: **ELEMENTARY TEACHER:** Allie Schliefer, Fort Calhoun, **SECONDARY TEACHER:** Dawn Metschke, Johnson-Brock, **ESU STAFF MEMBER:** Dr. Jean Anderson, ESU 10, **PRINCIPAL:** Jim Crilly, Madison, **CLASSIFIED STAFF MEMBER:** Kathy Houser, Meridian, **MUSIC TEACHER:** Kristi Hiles-Smith, Kimball, **BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER:** Rusty Rhynalds, Minden, **SUPERINTENDENT:** Jane Davis, Hershey



*ALLIE SCHLIEFER,
FORT CALHOUN*



*DAWN METSCHKE,
JOHNSON-BROCK*



*DR. JEAN ANDERSON,
ESU 10*



*JIM CRILLY,
MADISON*



*KATHY HOUSER,
MERIDIAN*



*KRISTI HILES-SMITH,
KIMBALL*



*RUSTY RHYNALDS,
MINDEN*



*JANE DAVIS,
HERSHEY*



VIKING JAZZ BAND–BERTRAND



GILTNER CHORUS

Dr. Mike Dulaney and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators were presented with NRCSA’s Friend of Rural Education Award at the NRCSA Spring Conference. Besides being NRCSA’s landlord, Dr. Dulaney and NCSA have been strategic partners with NRCSA in our work with the Legislature. Dr. Dulaney has been instrumental in pulling together groups in Education that work together to address legislative issues, including the Education Coalition and the Management Group. Both groups provide opportunities for leaders from several groups to share with each other what they are hearing and where their individual groups stand on issues. In pulling these groups together, he has provided an opportunity for all sized schools to be represented. NCSA’s staff is remarkable in working daily with NRCSA’s staff. We are truly partners in the NCSA building. Thank you to Dr. Dulaney and NCSA for being such great partners!



NCSA ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. TROY LOEFFELHIOLZ, NCSA CHAIR CHRIS PROSOSKI, NCSA FINANCE & MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR AMY POGGENKLASS, JACK MOLES, NCSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. MICHAEL DULANEY, NRCSA PRESIDENT CHRIS KUNCL

Partnerships to Build Readiness for Implementing Trauma-Informed Programs and Practices for Schools (TIPPS). We seek school partners for a two-phase initiative that includes measurement development and in-person or online personalized training and professional development.

In **PHASE 1**, we will partner with selected rural schools in Michigan and Nebraska to develop and test a

readiness assessment that will determine a school's preparedness to implement the 10 core pillars of the Trauma-Informed Programs and Practices for Schools (TIPPS) framework. TIPPS helps schools create safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environments by building relationships, increasing trauma awareness, and shifting from punitive to restorative discipline. To develop and test the readiness assessment, we will use a structured interview protocol that solicits input on identified priorities and existing strategies within each school that align with TIPPS objectives; determining professionals' knowledge of trauma and trauma supports; and exploring each school's capacity to onboard new trauma-informed strategies relevant to each core pillar.

In **PHASE 2** of the project, we will provide a 4-part professional training series tailored to the learning needs of each school, drawing on materials from our TIPPS toolkit, which includes a comprehensive assessment tool, program guide, implementation guide, and supplementary case materials designed to deepen understanding of trauma-informed principles and strategies. Content experts from the TIPPS team will provide ongoing consultation and coaching to each school at no cost. Pre-post assessments of the training series will document progress toward established learning goals, as well as school professionals' knowledge and confidence in implementing TIPPS strategies.

Program Information: <https://tipps.ssw.umich.edu/>

Project Period/Milestones: 2026-2027 Academic Year

Spring 2026 – Develop school partnerships

Summer 2026 – Prepare for project launch

Fall 2026 – Phase I

Spring 2027 – Phase II

Contact Information:

Alex Mason

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

amason19@unl.edu

Todd Herrenkohl

University of Michigan

tih@umich.edu

NREA Partners with SchoolSims for “Lead Where You Are” Webinar Series

Rural districts are not small versions of big systems. They are different systems with different constraints and different strengths. This three part NREA x SchoolSims webinar series is designed for rural and small district leaders who are building strong people systems with limited capacity. We will focus on practical, rural ready strategies for recruiting and selecting staff, strengthening onboarding and support, improving retention, and building sustainable structures that protect culture and reduce leader burnout. The series is offered at no cost to NREA members. The final webinar in the series is:

Session 3 – May 28, 2026 at 2pm CST

[Register here: Political Leadership in the Superintendency](#)

The goal of this Webinar is to help aspiring and sitting superintendents to explore a Political Leadership Framework to hone their skills so that they can more effectively lead change through complexity. We will share the Framework and then engage in a Superintendent level Simulation to challenge participants with various scenarios that require them to engage in the following proactive political leadership skills: visioning, communicating, political mapping, mobilizing and relationships building, while gaining and sustaining public trust and internal support. The central issue in the simulation exercise focuses on a district's discipline policy and its relationship with school safety—an issue that nearly all superintendents will encounter throughout their career.

You can learn more about the SchoolSims experiential learning PD here: SchoolSims | [Simulations for School Leaders & Teachers](#)



The Nebraska Unicameral ended its session on Friday, April 17. On the final day, Senators needed to vote on overriding the Governor’s vetoes of a few bills. On the whole, education came out fairly well in this year’s session (in my opinion). There were a few bills passed that were not what NRCSA may have supported, but for the most part the Education community was effective in helping to kill or soften bills that were opposed.

Four bills that took a lot of our attention over the last couple of weeks of the session were: LB1050, LB 803, LB937, and LB1219. The final standing of those bills:

LB1050: LB1050, the “Nebraska Reading Improvement Act”, was introduced as a way to ensure students are reading at grade level. The bill would have required the retention of students at the end of their 3rd grade year if they were not reading at grade level. Many supports and assessments were to be required to help students get to grade level. A few amendments were introduced to try and make the bill better, with one by Sen. Jana Hughes getting quite a bit of discussion. The Education community was against the bill, mainly because of the 3rd grade retention issue and the fact that the bill would create a substantial unfunded mandate. On Wednesday, April 8, the bill failed on a Cloture vote.

LB803 was originally a “shell bill”, but was amended by parts from several bills. There are several sections to the bill, but the sections directly relating to schools would deal with “pink postcard” hearings and budget increases. All school districts would be required to participate in the “pink postcard” hearing, which would be held between July 1 and July 15. The County would also advise property owners to the dates and times of each entity’s budget hearing. Finally, when voting to increase the property tax request at least a 2/3 majority vote of the members of the Board shall take place. This bill was placed on Final Reading on Wednesday, April 8. The bill passed in the Unicameral and was signed into law by the Governor on April 16.

LB 937 is a “Christmas tree” bill as several other bills were attached to it. Sen. Rountree attempted to attach LB81 to LB 937 through AM2965. This would have given the parent/guardian last say on a possible change in placement or services in an IEP. Currently the parent/guardian is part of the IEP team that makes such decisions. NRCSA, along with the rest of the Education community, was in opposition to the amendment. AM2965 failed to be adopted on Tuesday, April 7. LB937 was then passed by the Unicameral and signed into law by the Governor on April 16.

LB 1219 (Brant, priority bill of Hansen) was a bill that would set a hard cap of 2% increase in property tax request placed on governmental subdivisions, including school districts. There were several changes that were rumored to possibly be introduced to make the bill better, but still not good at all for school districts. There was some thought that it might appear in the Legislature’s agenda near the end of the session, but the Education community was relieved when it did not appear on the necessary day. Thus, it did not move forward.

A list of the bills that affect education that were passed this session can be accessed here:

[NRCSA Bill Summaries 2026](#)

Ideas on how to deal with cancellations for NRCSA events were shared with the Executive Committee several months ago. After receiving input from the Committee members, a policy was presented at the November meeting of the Executive Committee and adopted. Following is the policy that will be followed moving forward:

POLICY ON CANCELLATIONS FOR NRCSA EVENTS

When planning for a large event (i.e. NRCSA Spring Conference or NRCSA Legislative Forum), NRCSA must

make financial commitments such as facility rental and costs of meals. Weather sometimes causes a decision to be made by NRCSA in the form of a cancellation or postponement of the event, or for registrants to decide whether or not they can attend the event. Sometimes registrants need to make a decision not to attend due to other reasons. NRCSA has weighed the issues of its financial commitments versus registrants not being able to attend for various reasons. Thus, the following policy has been adopted:

WEATHER CANCELLATION DECISION MADE BY NRCSA:

All registrants, including vendors, will be offered a full refund or to have the registration fee carried forward to the next year's event.

WEATHER POSTPONEMENT DECISION MADE BY NRCSA:

All registrants, including vendors, will be offered a full refund or to have the registration fee carried forward to the re-scheduled event.

DECISION BY A REGISTRANT, INCLUDING VENDORS, TO NOT ATTEND THE EVENT AND COMMUNICATED TO NRCSA AT LEAST A WEEK PRIOR TO THE EVENT:

Two options will be provided to the registrant, including vendors: A full refund OR carry the registrant amount forward to the following year.

DECISION BY A REGISTRANT, INCLUDING VENDORS, TO NOT ATTEND THE EVENT AND COMMUNICATED TO NRCSA WITHIN A WEEK PRIOR TO THE EVENT:

For members, an option will be provided to have the registration fee carried forward to the next year's event OR a refund minus the costs to NRCSA for meal(s). (NOTE: In 2026, for the Spring Conference this would be \$105, for the Legislative Forum the cost is \$45.)

For vendors, the option to carry the registration amount to the following year will be provided.

DECISION BY A REGISTRANT TO NOT ATTEND THE EVENT, BUT FAILS TO COMMUNICATE WITH NRCSA PRIOR TO THE EVENT:

No refund will be provided.

The NRCSA Executive Committee has made a positive move to assist non-traditional educators move toward full teaching certification. As a result of this move, new scholarship opportunities were created for paras who are in a "para to teacher program" and for transitional educators. NRCSA will provide three \$1,000 scholarships for the fall semester and three \$1,000 scholarships for the spring semester each school year. Applicants for the scholarships must be current employees of a NRCSA-member district or ESU. Applicants must be enrolled for that semester in one of two types of programs: (1) in a recognized "para to teacher" program such as is offered by the three State Colleges (Chadron State, Peru State, or Wayne State), or (2) a transition to teaching program in which a person with a minimum of a bachelor's degree who is employed to teach in a member school while working through a transitional program, such as offered by the University of Nebraska-Kearney. The applicant could currently be teaching under a transitional certificate. Applications for the Summer/Fall Semester were recently forwarded to NRCSA Superintendents and are due on Monday, April 20.

Applications for the Summer/Fall semester were received and the three recipients were selected. They were:

- Jemma DeNaeyer, Thedford
- Veronica Schiffbauer, HTRS
- Chelsey Georges, District OR-1, Palmyra-Bennet



Theford Principal Adam Kuntz, Brooklyn Denaeyer, Jemma Denaeyer, Kloey Denaeyer, Jack Moles



Director of Student Programs Linde Walter, Dylaney Georges, Justin Georges, Brea Georges, Chelsey Georges, Jack Moles, Logan Georges, Supt. Michael Hart, Elementary Principal Jared Haag



Jack Moles, Veronica Schiffbauer, HTRS Supt. George Griffith

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH & PLANNING

As Boards of Education and Superintendents start to plan for the future, there may be a change in Superintendent approaching your district. We would like to remind you that NRCSA has an outstanding Superintendent Search Service and I would encourage your Board of Education to closely consider these services if you are in need of a Superintendent.

NRCSA has already helped the Axtell, Bancroft-Rosalie, Hampton, Hayes Center, Newman Grove, Potter-Dix, Sandy Creek and Superior Boards of Education identify their next Superintendent. We also assisted Red Cloud and Blue Hill in searches for Interim Superintendents.

One of the more outstanding features of the NRCSA Superintendent Search Service is that the consultants who assist Boards of Education with their searches are all retired rural school Superintendents who experienced great success in their careers. They know what it takes to be successful in a rural school district and community, and how to work closely with a rural school Board of Education. Our current consultants are: Jim Havelka, Fred Helmink, Robin Stevens, Rob Hanger, Caroline Winchester, Curtis Cogswell, Paul Sheffield, Mo Hanks, Mark Norvell, and Jay Bellar.

If your district finds a need to locate your next school leader, please be sure to keep the NRCSA Superintendent Search Service in mind. For more information you can contact Executive Director Jack Moles at jmoles@nrca.net or by phone at 402-335-7732.

Another service that is offered is a planning service. It is a common practice for Boards of Education and the Superintendent to develop short and long-term plans. We are currently assisting Anselmo-Merna in their planning process. NRCSA does provide a quality service using experienced consultants. If you are interested in more information, please contact Executive Director Jack Moles.

[NRCSA Search Service Brochure](#)

[NRCSA Planning Support Brochure](#)

Board of Education meeting visits. Beginning in December, 2019, I started attending Board of Education meetings in member school districts/ESUs. Since then, I have attended 148 such meetings. I most recently attended the Board meeting at Wallace on Monday, April 13..

I am not currently scheduled to attend any Board of Education meeting in the near future, but could work some in if the dates were available to me.

I have really enjoyed this venture and am willing to attend Board meetings when I can. I take a few minutes to cover NRCSA news and offerings, as well as a legislative update. When I am going to be in a specific area on Board meeting days I may send out a notice to near-by Superintendents to make an offer to visit. I'd like to be able to schedule two or three in the same evening if I can.

If you would be interested in me attending a future Board meeting, please contact me to start the arrangements. I would also be willing to "attend" your Board meetings via Zoom if you preferred. I would still only do one at a time but would be able to do several in the same evening. Let me know and we will try to make the connection.



WALLACE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION

NRCSA was well-represented at the National Rural Education Association’s Federal Advocacy Conference in Washington DC. The Conference was held on March 23-25. Representing NRCSA were Executive Director Jack Moles, Legislative Co-Chair Bryce Jorgenson, and Executive Director-Elect Paul Sheffield.



NREA created documents that outlined our Federal legislative agenda. Those documents may be accessed here:

[Download NREA Policy Agenda](#)

The Nebraska Statewide Workforce & Educational Reporting System (NSWERS) has released a new research brief examining chronic absenteeism in Nebraska’s K–12 schools and its effect on student outcomes, including assessment scores, graduation rates, and college enrollment.

The analysis highlights that chronic absenteeism—defined as missing 10 percent or more of the school year for any reason—has risen sharply in Nebraska since the COVID-19 pandemic and remains persistently high. Rates jumped from 10 percent in 2019–2020 to nearly 24 percent the following school year and have since remained above 20 percent statewide.

Key Findings from the NSWERS brief:

- Nebraska’s chronic absenteeism rate has stabilized but remains elevated at more than one in five students.
- Disparities exist across student race/ethnicity, with Indigenous/Native American and Black students showing the highest rates of chronic absenteeism.
- Chronically-absent students consistently score lower on statewide assessments (NSCAS and ACT) compared to their peers.
- Chronic absenteeism greatly reduces the likelihood of graduating on time; students with regular attendance are nearly six times more likely to graduate high school than their chronically-absent peers.
- College-going rates show a significant divide: nearly 71 percent of non-chronically absent graduates enroll in postsecondary education compared to just 49 percent of chronic absentees.

“These findings underscore the lasting impact of chronic absenteeism on students’ academic progress and future opportunities,” said Dr. Jay Jeffries, author of the brief. “Addressing absenteeism requires not only monitoring the type of absence but also understanding the characteristics of students who are chronically absent.”

The full report, NSWERS Brief on the Impact of Chronic Absenteeism on Academic Outcomes in Nebraska, is available at:

<https://insights.nswers.org/briefs/2025-chronic-absenteeism>

A year ago, NRCSA introduced a new initiative to assist rural schools in educating their communities about digital citizenship. Our partnership with A.Plum Creative will provide members with ready-to-use, research-based resources designed to help districts promote responsible technology use among students and families.

The program has its origins out of a goal by the Hershey Board of Education and Superintendent Jane Davis to work on digital citizenship in their district. The district worked with A.Plum Creative on the initiative, then shared information on the program with the NRCSA Executive Committee.

This research based, legally vetted campaign includes monthly social media graphics and captions that focus on key topics like online safety, respectful communication, digital wellness and appropriate tech use. All content is designed to engage school communities and support districts in meeting digital citizenship education goals.

We offer a set of tiered service options for NRCSA Member Districts:

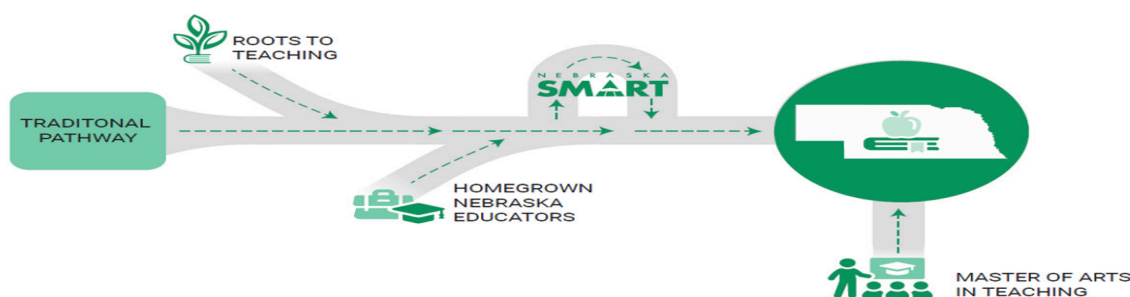
- Tier 1 – NRCSA Branded Content (\$2,500/school year): Monthly graphics and captions with NRCSA branding, aligned to seasonal themes and events.
- Tier 2 – District-Branded Content (\$5,000/school year): Customized graphics and captions tailored to your district’s brand and messaging.
- Tier 3 – Custom Content + Consultation (\$7,500/school year): District-branded content plus three planning calls per year with A.Plum Creative.
- Tier 4 – Full Social Media Management (\$10,000/school year): District-branded content, full posting and scheduling, community engagement and monthly performance reports.

A few more NRCSA-member districts have since started working with A-Plum Creative. This campaign is available exclusively to NRCSA member districts. To learn more or reserve your spot, contact Anna Weber at anna@a-plum.com or visit www.a-plum.com.

[Good Life EDU Podcast Featuring Anna Weber & Jane Davis](#)

Expanding the Educator Pipeline through Innovative Nebraska State College Initiatives.

Educator Preparation Pathways



The Nebraska State Colleges (Chadron, Peru, and Wayne) are proactively addressing the growing teacher shortage across the state, particularly in rural communities. With their evolution beginning as Normal Schools to present, and approximately 28% of undergraduate students majoring in teacher education (the largest comprehensive major system-wide), the Colleges have long played a central role in preparing future educators.

However, as Nebraska faces increasingly urgent staffing shortages in K–12 classrooms, especially in high-need areas such as special education, early childhood, and STEM, the State Colleges continue to evolve to meet this challenge through four strategic initiatives.

Nebraska Roots to Teaching (NRT), seeks to offer a high school-to-career educator pathway modeled after Washington State’s successful Recruiting Washington Teachers (RWT) program. Anchored in Wayne State College’s STEP (Students to Teachers through Educator Pathways) program, NRT is expanding dual credit options in education across the three colleges. High school students (especially first-generation and underrepresented learners) will be able to complete introductory education courses for dual credit, participate in campus-based experiences, and receive mentorship from teacher-mentors and college “navigators” throughout their transition into college and early teaching careers. Flexible modalities, financial incentives, and future paraeducator credentialing further broaden access for rural students.

The **Homegrown Nebraska Educators Apprenticeship Program** seeks to leverage new flexibility under Nebraska Department of Education Rules 20 and 21 to provide an alternative pathway to certification for paraprofessionals and place-bound adults. Building on Chadron State College’s pilot model, this initiative allows candidates to remain employed in their local districts while completing a bachelor’s degree and teacher certification. Courses are fully online and asynchronous, ensuring flexibility for working adults. The program emphasizes district-identified endorsement areas, such as special education and elementary education, and uses a competency-based credit model to reward relevant experience.

The **Nebraska SMART (Success Made Accessible through Rural Tutoring)** initiative connects teacher education candidates from the three State Colleges with K–12 students in their home districts through virtual tutoring. Focused on supporting rural schools, SMART offers academic help during afternoons and evenings while providing early, meaningful field experience for teacher candidates. By allowing candidates to serve students in their own communities, the program strengthens local ties and broadens access to educational support. SMART not only improves outcomes for K–12 learners but also enhances the preparation of future educators committed to serving Nebraska’s rural schools and communities.

Lastly, the **Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)** is a distinct, graduate-level program designed for individuals who hold a bachelor's degree in a core content area and seek teacher certification in Nebraska. Delivered fully online, the 18-credit core of the program ensures that individuals fully meet certification requirements and provides a flexible path to licensure, while the additional 18 credits of the graduate program provide options to complete the required content courses to qualify for teaching dual credit courses or work toward specific endorsement requirements. Individuals can choose to complete the core course which lead to certification without committing to the MAT; however, the completion of the MAT graduate program assists individuals in completing elective coursework that moves them toward their career goals. Unlike the Homegrown Nebraska Educators apprenticeship model, which supports paraprofessionals pursuing a bachelor's degree, the MAT serves adult career changers and professionals seeking a direct, advanced entry into the teaching profession. Together, these initiatives form a comprehensive ecosystem of entry points into the teaching profession. From high school dual credit options and rural tutoring roles to full apprenticeship models and flexible graduate pathways, the Nebraska State Colleges are creating scalable solutions to address Nebraska's critical teacher shortage, ensuring every community has access to well-prepared, locally rooted educators for years to come.

Chris Prososki, formerly the Superintendent at Southern has shared a sample Superintendent Checklist that he has used. I thought this was a great instrument, one that I wished I had available to me when I was in the Superintendency. It can be especially helpful as you head into the new school year! Thanks to Chris for sharing this! You can access the updated checklist here:

[Superintendent Check List](#)

NRCSA has had the great privilege to work closely with Open Sky Policy Institute over the years. They provide great information on the fiscal impact of legislation that is very helpful to me in my work as NRCSA's chief lobbyist. I would encourage Superintendents and Board of Education members to sign up to receive Open Sky's email updates.

Open Sky has developed some awesome **Nebraska Public School District Profiles** instruments. The instruments provide much information that can be used to tell the story of your district in comparison to other districts when discussing school finance. The instruments can be accessed at:

<https://www.openskypolicy.org/school-district-profile/>

The mission of OpenSky Policy Institute is to provide impartial and precise research, analysis, education and leadership on fiscal policy-improving opportunities for all Nebraskans. Subscribe to their email updates at **<https://bit.ly/OpenSkyUpdates>** or contact Todd Henrichs at **thenrichs@openskypolicy.org**.

As we head into the new legislative session, Open Sky has shared a few more tools that can be especially helpful. A message from Rebecca Firestone, Executive Director for Open Sky shares:

Dear friends,

On behalf of the team at OpenSky, I want to thank you for the work you have done to prepare for the important policy work ahead for all of us this year.

We wanted to take an opportunity to share a few quick reference materials we have developed that we think will be especially useful this session (attached).

- 1. A one-page guide to TEEOSA, the K-12 public school funding formula. With significant changes promised to the formula in pursuit of property tax relief, we felt it was important to share the current state of play.*
- 2. A guide on the budget process, including a timeline, who is involved, and a breakdown of important components of the state budget. With a significant deficit heading into session, lawmakers will grapple*

with complex decisions regarding spending. At OpenSky, we are ready to work towards a budget that reflects the priorities of Nebraskans and allows everyone a shot at The Good Life, and we look forward to partnering with you in this work.

I also wanted to introduce you to some new members of our team who you may interact with during the upcoming session:

Lillian Butler-Hale joins our team as Outreach and Engagement Director. She replaces Joey Adler Ruane, who will continue to support OpenSky for some time from his new role with the lobbying firm Lindsay Harr MacDonald. Lillian was most recently in the office of Senator Jen Day and will be a great asset to the team during this session. Please make sure to say hello when you see her in the rotunda.

Noah Rhoades just joined us in a new role as Outreach and Engagement Manager. He will support our legislative work as well as community engagement and outreach efforts, including coalition building. We are excited to have him on board.

We are also launching a refreshed website at www.openskypolicy.org, and last, but not least, we have moved! Same building, bigger office. Please make note that our new address is 1325 H Street, Suite 200 Lincoln, NE 68508. We look forward to welcoming you to our new space soon, when we are a little more settled.

We are excited to work alongside all of you this session, and here to be a resource. Don't hesitate to reach out to me or anyone on the team if you need us.

*Onward,
Rebecca*

[Open Sky TEEOSA Guide](#)
[Open Sky Budget Process Guide](#)

NRCSA is pleased to be in a partnership with New Leaf Teletherapy. New Leaf provides mental health teletherapy services for both staff and students. I became very interested in this possibility especially in terms of staff services. I know our members are working hard to provide services for their students, but there does not appear to be that same capability when looking at staff services.

I look at this service as helping to bolster what your district is already doing, not to take the place of those efforts. I believe this can be a cost effective means of furthering your efforts.

NRCSA hosted three introductory Zoom meetings with Mark Goldman and Deb Romano of New Leaf to have them explain what the program would look like. Below you can access the slide show from those meetings, as well as a recording of one of the meetings.

[New Leaf PowerPoint Presentation](#)

[New Leaf Zoom Meeting \(recording\)](#)



[New Leaf Flyer](#)

If you would like to be in contact with Mark Goldman or Deb Romano, please feel free to call or email me and I can help make that happen.

NRCSA has developed a “resource” document to assist members when they want insight on a particular topic. Often we are contacted and asked if we know of a school that has experience in a topic of interest. Many times we can point them in the right direction, but often we need to put out a request for information to the members. We have developed a list to begin from and already have some contact information on some of the topics. The plan is to feature this list in each of our monthly updates. Below is a link to a copy of the list. If you would be willing to be listed as a resource or if you would like to suggest other topics for inclusion, please contact Jack Moles.

[NRCSA School Programs](#)

We urge you to consider participation in the NRCSA Partner OneCard program as a tool for you in managing school expenditures, both large and small. Certainly, the card can help reduce/eliminate any issues relative to unverified cash expenditures. You decide who uses it, can get cards for each of those users, keep all cards wherever you wish, determine the amount to load on each individual card, and how long the time frame of use is. It is a terrific management tool and clearly identifies each expenditure/name/date/amount. Whether small purchases or very large purchases, the card is a terrific tool. NRCSA owns the state contract, so liability for misuse falls to NRCSA, not the district user. We have only had three circumstances of fraud and all three have been the theft of the card number information, not any district employee misuse. For 2024-25, over 100 districts/ESUs participated in the program. We currently have **109** entities using the program. In talking with some districts, there is a chance there could be upwards of 112 entities participating. Great job by all participating districts in protecting the card and program! Don't forget, the NRCSA rebate from the transaction fee paid by businesses that choose to accept plastic is used for scholarship, awards, and special needs. For 2024-25, the rebate was over \$34,000 to NRCSA, showing that use is increasing, and large purchases are being included. WIN, WIN, WIN! If you are considering joining the program and need more information, please contact Jack Moles (jmoles@nrca.net) or Jeff Bundy (jbundy@nrca.net).

U.S. Bank provided two webinars for those considering using the program or for those who are currently using it, but want to find out more about the program. The slides from the webinar are available below.

[U.S. Bank Commercial Card Program](#)



NRCSA wishes to share in the celebration of the special accomplishments and recognitions going on in our member schools and ESUs.

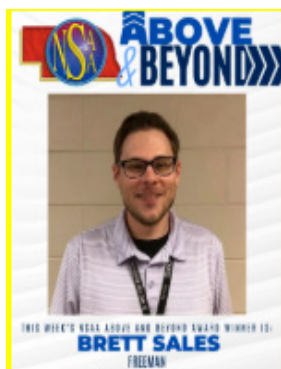
May 2026:

*** The S-E-M FFA organized a “fence drive” to help ranchers after the wildfires.**



*** The NSAA’s Above and Beyond program is designed to recognize and celebrate the outstanding individuals who make a meaningful impact within their communities. Whether it’s a student, coach, community member, or parent, this award honors those who go the extra mile to support and uplift others. The NSAA recognizes an individual each week. Individuals from NRCSA member school districts who have been recognized recently are:**

- April 15: Danielle Reader of Kimball.
- April 22: Brett Sales of Freeman.
- April 29: Andy Seaman of Brady.
- March 6: John Street of Ponca.



*** Many students from NRCSA-member schools were honored as 1st Team All-State in Basketball by either the Omaha World-Herald (OWH), Lincoln Journal-Star (LJS), or both. Included were:**

- GIRLS SUPER-STATE: Halle Doliver, Malcolm (OWH, LJS), Shayla Rautenberg, Milford (OWH, LJS)
- GIRLS C-1: Halle Dolliver, Malcolm (OWH, LJS), Shayla Rautenberg, Milford (OWH, LJS), Payton Dolliver, Malcolm (OWH, LJS), Zoe Beveridge, Gothenburg (OWH, LJS), Halsey Thomalla, Gothenburg (OWH, LJS)
- GIRLS C-2: Mylee Tichota, Yutan (OWH, LJS), Hadley Walsh, Pender (OWH, LJS), Madalyn Dolliver, Pender (OWH, LJS), Briar Ray Oakland-Craig (OWH, LJS)
- GIRLS D-1: Madyson Mlady, Bloomfield (OWH, LJS), Kylie Brichacek, Howells-Dodge (OWH, LJS), Kennedy Mlady, Bloomfield (OWH, LJS), Kendal Cavanee, Elm Creek (OWH, LJS), Caylie Softley, Maywood-Hayes Center (OWH, LJS)
- GIRLS D-2: Abigail Spargo, Dundy County-Stratton (OWH, LJS), Taryn Arbuthnot, SEM (OWH, LJS), Kenna Oligmueller, Wynot (OWH, LJS), Clara Spargo, Dundy County-Stratton (OWH, LJS), Aiva Rust, Red Cloud (LJS), Josie Faimon, Red Cloud (OWH)
- BOYS SUPER-STATE: Sawyer Smith, Ogallala (OWH, LJS)
- BOYS C-1: Sawyer Smith, Ogallala (OWH, LJS), Jack Poppe, Doniphan-Trumbull (OWH, LJS), Nolan Asher, DC West (OWH, LJS), Brenton Wenzl, Auburn (OWH)
- BOYS C-2: Isaac Cronin, Valentine (OWH, LJS), Drew Siems, Tri County (OWH, LJS), Grady Bresson, EMF (OWH, LJS)
- BOYS D-1: Quin Oberg, Elm Creek (OWH, LJS), Carson McDonald McCool Junction (OWH, LJS), Vahya Harris, Twin Loup (LJS), Kane Wetovick, Fullerton (LJS), Nathan Tomcak, Howells-Dodge (OWH), Andre Martin, Howells-Dodge (OWH)
- BOYS D-2: Brennan Lindener, Pleasanton (OWH, LJS)

*** Nebraska FFA recently announced its state officers for 2026-27. Included from NRCSA-member schools are:**

- PRESIDENT: Carson Reiman (Gothenburg)
- VICE-PRESIDENTS: Megan Macklin (Blue Hill), Logan Bell (Broken Bow), Josette McConnell (Sidney), Levi Othmer (Johnson County Central)
- SECRETARY: Luke Eisenmann (Leigh)

*** The State FFA Convention took place on March 25-27. Many students from NRCSA-member schools placed first in different competitions or tests. They include:**

STATE STAR WINNERS:

- AGRIBUSINESS: Peyton Halvorsen, Lakeview
- PLACEMENT: Trevor Sloup, Lakeview
- PRODUCTION: Jett Johnson, Holdrege

NEBRASKA CAREER DEVELOPMENT EVENTS:

- AG BIOTECHNOLOGY: Noah Seberger, Trey Anthony, Carter Buell, Collin Hagan (Rock County)

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- AG COMMUNICATIONS: Noah Seberger, Addie Wiest, Trevor Keller, Ireland Buell (Rock County)
- AG ISSUES: Hailee Greiner, Hannah Greiner, Katelyn Melvin, Charlotte Metschke, Layla Miller (Johnson-Brock)
- AG TECHNOLOGY & MECHANICS: Sam Kahl, Jack O'Brien, Jack Price, Matt Lien (Chadron)
- AGRISCIENCE: Shelby Hemmer, Brenna Wieseler, Emily Preister, Mackenzie Kurtenbach (Humphrey)
- AGRONOMY: Hunter Kugler, Maddie Kugler, Christian Maurer, Malakai White (Eustis-Farnam)
- ENVIRONMENTAL & NATURAL RESOURCES: Ethan Fries, Aspen Tool, Kole Steiner, Jesse Buck (Elm Creek)
- FARM & AGRIBUSINESS MANAGEMENT: Luke Eisenmann, Kyle McMullin, Brayden Loseke, Carmen Malena (Leigh)
- FLORICULTURE: Addison Howerter, Emma Howerter, Ava Joyce, Mollie Spradlin (Cozad)
- FOOD SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY: Charlotte Metschke, Vivian Gerdes, Delani Sharples, Addison Grotrian (Johnson-Brock)
- FORESTRY: Ayla Salistean, Sadie Frazier, Chris Wissenburg, Allie Gerdes (Milford)
- LIVESTOCK EVALUATION-JR. DIVISION: Ashlyn Wendell, Adlea Hock, Baylee Kipp, Adrian Sand (Bertrand-Loomis)
- LIVESTOCK EVALUATION-SR. DIVISION: Aiddan Buhrman, Hayden Schroeder, Emerson Bellar, Paislie Burki (Wisner-Pilger)
- LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT: Sydney Brauer, Erika Cruikshank, Caleb Schnuelle, Justus Wehrman, Jacob Wollenburg (Tri County)
- MARKETING PLAN: Tayden Berggren, Aiden Lukasiewicz, Caisen Powell (St. Paul)
- MEATS EVALUATION & TECHNOLOGY: Ethan Oberg, Brecken Hecox, Bentley Stubbs, Whitney Page (Eustis-Farnam)
- NURSERY & LANDSCAPE: Berkleigh Dvorak, London Konrad, Elizabeth Olson, Makenna Mitchell (West Holt)
- POULTRY EVALUATION: Jace Rasmussen, Brogan Benes, Cody Andreasen, Bethany Preister (Boone Central)
- VETERINARY SCIENCE: Jackson Blomstedt, Braceton Hauxwell, Reese Gillespie, Parker Nokes (McCook)

LDE:

- SPANISH CREED SPEAKING: David Leone, Lakeview
- COOPERATIVE SPEAKING: Claire Holoubek, Clarkson
- CREED SPEAKING: Maelee Forch, Dundy County-Stratton
- EXTEMPORANEOUS SPEAKING: Matrix Butterfield, Gothenburg
- EMPLOYMENT SKILLS: Hayden Uerling, McCook
- NATURAL RESOURCES SPEAKING: Brayden Wolinski, Hampton
- SENIOR PUBLIC SPEAKING: Carson Reiman, Gothenburg
- AGRICULTURAL DEMONSTRATION: Bruning- Davenport

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- CONDUCT OF CHAPTER MEETINGS: West Holt
- MIDDLE SCHOOL DISCOVERY SPEAKING: Trevor Cruikshank (Arlington)
- MIDDLE SCHOOL AG LITERACY SPEAKING: Kirsten Allen (Arthur County)

PROFICIENCY RESULTS:

- AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION: Addy Seamann, Riverside
- AGRICULTURAL MECHANICS DESIGN & FABRICATION: Carter Molt, Riverside
- AGRICULTURAL MECHANICS REPAIR & MAINTENANCE-ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Derek Osten, Bancroft-Rosalie
- AGRICULTURAL MECHANICS REPAIR & MAINTENANCE-PLACEMENT: Kail Fickel, Alliance
- AGRICULTURAL PROCESSING: Peyton Eisenhauer, Bloomfield
- AGRICULTURAL SALES-ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Alex Morner, McCool Junction
- AGRICULTURAL SALES-PLACEMENT: Katrina Moyer, West Point
- AGRICULTURAL SERVICES: Jaret Potthoff, Fillmore Central
- AGRISCIENCE RESEARCH-PLANT SYSTEMS: Anel Monasterio, West Holt
- AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY: Dawson Bieghler, Southern Valley
- BEEF PRODUCTION-ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Jaelin Wolfinger, SEM
- BEEF PRODUCTION-PLACEMENT: Ericka Larsen, Burwell
- DAIRY PRODUCTION-ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Angela Frick, Keya Paha
- DAIRY PRODUCTION-PLACEMENT: Shaylee Heidtbrink, Malcolm
- DIVERSIFIED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION: Isaac Hemenway, Elgin
- DIVERSIFIED CROP PRODUCTION-ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Mitchell Kelly, Pender
- DIVERSIFIED CROP PRODUCTION-PLACEMENT: Jett Johnson, Holdrege
- DIVERSIFIED HORTICULTURE: Kate Janak, East Butler
- DIVERSIFIED LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION: Hannah Beel, Ainsworth
- EQUINE SCIENCE-ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Kit Painter, Keya Paha
- EQUINE SCIENCE-PLACEMENT: Ryggin Meyer, Alliance
- FIBER AND/OR OIL CROP PRODUCTION: Ellie Janing, Fillmore Central
- FORAGE PRODUCTION: Kaiden Bode, Elgin
- FOREST MANAGEMENT & PRODUCTS: Maxton Meysenburg, Fullerton
- FRUIT & NUT PRODUCTION: Annie Ludwig, Stuart
- GRAIN PRODUCTION: Preston Beattie, SEM
- HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES: James Fletcher, Litchfield
- HOME AND/OR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY PROGRAMMING: Logan Meguire, Northwest

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- HOSPITALITY, RESTAURANT, & TOURISM MANAGEMENT: Morgan Menke, Stuart
- LANDSCAPE INSTALLATION: Hunter Swanson, West Point
- NURSERY OPERATIONS: Ava Hoffman, West Holt
- OUTDOOR RECREATION: Jager Leicheiter, Tekamah-Herman
- RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION/TECHNOLOGY: Colby Smith, Meridian
- SALES & SERVICES: Taylor Walnofer, West Holt
- SERVICE LEARNING: Brooklyn Burri, Alliance
- SHEEP PRODUCTION: Jordan Musil, Wilber-Clatonia
- SPECIALTY ANIMAL PRODUCTION: Zane Doke, Stuart
- SPECIALTY CROP PRODUCTION: Landon Peterson, Meridian
- SWINE PRODUCTION-ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Olivia Schafer, Meridian
- TURF & LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE: Peyton Halvorsen, Lakeview
- VEGETABLE PRODUCTION: Carson Reiman, Gothenburg
- VETERINARY SCIENCE: Cameron Berliner, Stapleton

*** The Nebraska School Activities Association recently announced its newest members of the Student Advisory Committee. Students from NRCSA-member schools include Aleigha Negley (Cozad), Jolie Buechler (Minden), Audrey Moorhead (South Platte), Adalyn Bishop (Twin River), and Ethan Samuelson (Wayne).**

*** The recipient of the 2026 NASES Outstanding New Special Education Supervisor is Dr. Susan Lindblad, Special Services Director at Adams Central Public Schools.**



*** The Nebraska Department of Education recently announced students who have received the 2026 Nebraska Seal of Biliteracy. Students from NRCSA-member schools who were recognized, most in Spanish, are:**

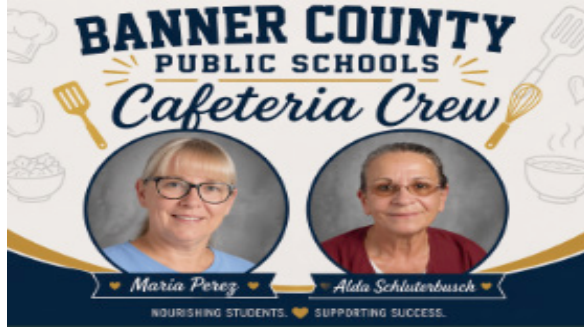
- AURORA: Emely Gonzalez Rodriguez
- DESHLER: Danica O'Neal
- GIBBON: Bianca Corona
- KENESAW: Cooper Shurigar
- LEXINGTON: Adriana Solivan, Alexa Cardenas, Andres Perez, Angela G. Ramirez-Ramirez, Ashley Grijalva, Ashley Najera, Ashley Renteria, Aubrey Ackerson, Christopher Hernandez, Cristobal Madrigal

Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

- MALCOLM: Amanda Mendez-Castro
- WISNER-PILGER: Adelynn Sateren, Axton Lantz
- LEXINGTON: Asma Ahmed (Somali)

*** The Nebraska Department of Recognition is recognizing school nutrition programs with an honor entitled “Nebraska School Nutrition Royalty”. The food service workers at several NRCSA-member schools have been recognized, including:**

- Arcadia
- Aurora
- Banner County
- Bertrand
- Boone Central
- Brady
- Burwell
- Callaway
- Cambridge
- Cozad
- Eustis-Farnam
- Fullerton
- Harvard
- Howells-Dodge
- HTRS
- Johnson County Central
- Lakeview
- Laurel-Concord-Colridge
- Logan View
- Loup City
- Loup County
- Neligh-Oakdale
- Newman Grove
- North Bend
- Ogallala
- Ord
- Osceola



HARVARD FOOD SERVICE TEAM



JOHNSON COUNTY CENTRAL FOOD SERVICE TEAM



OSCEOLA NUTRITION SERVICES TEAM



WALTHILL FOOD SERVICE TEAM



WAYNE FOOD SERVICE TEAM

- Plattsmouth
- Potter-Dix
- Randolph
- Sargent
- Stapleton
- Stuart
- Superior
- Tekamah-Herman
- Twin River
- Walthill
- Wayne
- Wynot



LOUP COUNTY FOOD SERVICE TEAM



BRADY FOOD SERVICE TEAM

*** Nebraska FBLA recently announced the State Officers for 2026-27. Included from NRCSA-member schools are:**

- PRESIDENT: Madilynn Nolan, Boyd County
- TREASURER: Dylan Auten, Blue Hill

*** Nebraska FBLA recently held its State Conference. Students from NRCSA-member schools who won events at the conference include:**

- ADVERTISING: Amity Scwartzendruber (Fillmore Central)
- AGRIBUSINESS: Garrett Smidt (Tri-County)
- BROADCAST JOURNALISM: Caylin Boelhower, Lydia Franklin, Emilia Uhrmacher (Adams Central)
- BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: Isaac Hamilton (Southern Valley)
- BUSINESS ETHICS: Audrey Svoboda (Northwest)
- BUSINESS PLAN: Grace Meister, Macy Nelson (Twin River)
- CAREER PORTFOLIO: Kiersten Jensen (Conestoga)
- CODING & PROGRAMMING: Eduardo Vargas (Schuyler)
- COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT: Elle Cromwell, Tricia Kunkee, Tayla Zarek (Twin River)
- COMPUTER APPLICATIONS: Macy Nelson (Twin River)
- COMPUTER GAME & SIMULATION PROGRAMMING: Landon Rutjens, Irelyn Bearinger (Elkhorn Valley)
- COMPUTER PROBLEM SOLVING: Landon Rutjens (Elkhorn Valley)
- DATA SCIENCE AND AI: Isaac Hamilton (Southern Valley)
- DIGITAL VIDEO PRODUCTION: Isaiah Sinachack (Axtell)

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- ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Grant Kuta, Edwin Naranjo (Boone Central)
- FINANCIAL PLANNING: Madison May, Kloe Sundermeier (Ravenna)
- FINANCIAL STATEMENT ANALYSIS: Henry Christenson, Landon Danhauer, Ryan Staehr (Aurora)
- FUTURE BUSINESS EDUCATOR: Sarah Payne (Centennial)
- HOSPITALITY & EVENT MANAGEMENT: Malynn Boyles, James Fletcher (Litchfield)
- IMPROMPTU SPEAKING: Edwin Naranjo (Boone Central)
- INTRO TO BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS: Kaycee Lange (Leigh)
- INTRO TO BUSINESS PRESENTATION: Keeley Moninger, Tristan Taylor, Tylee Fenton (Broken Bow)
- INTRO TO FBLA: Lachlan White (Broken Bow)
- INTRO TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: Elijah Placke (Centura)
- INTRO TO PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE: Katelyn Melvin (Johnson-Brock)
- INTRO TO PROGRAMMING: Lydia Franklin (Adams Central)
- INTRO TO SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY: Maddie Franzluebbbers (Emerson-Hubbard)
- INTRO TO SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT: Isaac Sowards (Tri-County)
- JOB INTERVIEW: Rylen Soundy (Doniphan-Trumbull)
- JOURNALISM: Chili Potmesil (Alliance)
- LOCAL CHAPTER ANNUAL BUSINESS REPORT: Marissa Jensen, Cortni Lovell, Grace Schulte (Raymond Central)
- MOBILE APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT: Landon Rutjens (Elkhorn Valley)
- PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE: Malynn Boyles, Caydence Feldman, James Fletcher, Ava Paitz (Litchfield)
- PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT: Jayke Krueger, Madelyn Ramaekers, Kendal Wineteer (Aurora)
- SALES PRESENTATION: Jonathan Althouse, Frank Kovacs (Minden)
- SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES: Skylar Hurt, Shiloh Smith (Centura)
- VISUAL DESIGN: Sophie Morfield, Kendall Schneider, Rowan Stodola (Clarkson)

*** Students from NRCSA-member schools who placed first in the FBLA Middle School contests include:**

- ANNUAL CHAPTER ACTIVITIES: Marissa Blake, Dylan Eddie, Kerrigan Johannes (Arlington)
- CAREER EXPLORATION: Olivia Hake (Leigh)
- CAREER RESEARCH: Corbyn Rasby (Johnson-Brock)
- COMMUNITY SERVICE: Zuri Booth, Layla Borowiak, Lausyn Matthes (Twin River)
- DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP: Jameson McBride (Elmwood-Murdock)
- EXPLORING ACCOUNTING & FINANCE: Perrin McMann (Raymond Central)
- EXPLORING AGRIBUSINESS: Kate Field (Raymond Central)

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- EXPLORING ANIMATION: Tyler Praus, Teagan Reed (Arlington)
- EXPLORING BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: Marissa Blake (Arlington)
- EXPLORING BUSINESS CONCEPTS: Grayson Owens (Chase County)
- EXPLORING BUSINESS ETHICS: Kellen Nielsen (Elmwood-Murdock)
- EXPLORING BUSINESS ISSUES: Ty Nielsen, Jayden Wilcox (Emerson-Hubbard)
- EXPLORING COMPUTER SCIENCE: Israel Gehring (Twin River)
- EXPLORING CUSTOMER SERVICE: Kerrigan Johannes (Arlington)
- EXPLORING DIGITAL VIDEO PRODUCTION: Mazee Everett, Brylee Ramaekers (Twin River)
- EXPLORING ECONOMICS: Corbyn Rasby (Johnson-Brock)
- EXPLORING FBLA: Rebecca Reeves (Chase County)
- EXPLORING LEADERSHIP: Kate Field (Raymond Central)
- EXPLORING MANAGEMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP: Dylan Eddie, Eli Hegemann, Marissa Blake (Arlington)
- EXPLORING MARKETING CONCEPTS: Dylan Eddie (Arlington)
- EXPLORING MARKETING STRATEGIES: Taylin Tobias (Sargent)
- EXPLORING PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE: Rebecca Reeves (Chase County)
- EXPLORING PERSONAL FINANCE: Perrin McMann (Raymond Central)
- EXPLORING PROFESSIONALISM: Emmett Zarek (Twin River)
- EXPLORING PUBLIC SPEAKING: Ava Garwood (Boyd County)
- EXPLORING TECHNOLOGY: Jackson Steinmeyer (Fairbury)
- EXPLORING WEBSITE DESIGN: Carly Nolan, Emma Ohri (Boyd County)
- INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION: Kerrigan Johannes (Arlington)
- SLIDE DECK APPLICATIONS: Chloe Cartwright (Arlington)
- SPREADSHEET APPLICATIONS: Emmit Jones (Elmwood-Murdock)

*** Three students at the State Colleges have been appointed by Gov. Jim Pillen to serve as Student Trustees on the Nebraska State College System’s Board of Trustees. They are:**

- Daniella Akwanamnye, Chadron State College
- Lucas Hrabik, Peru State College. Lucas is a graduate of NRCSA-member Louisville High School.
- Mattie Kucera, Wayne State College. Mattie is a graduate of NRCSA-member Raymond Central High School.



*** Several students from NRCSA-member schools placed first at the NSAA's State Journalism Championships. The include:**

CLASS B:

- Samantha Fehrer of West Point-Beemer (Newspaper Sports Feature Writing)
- Kiley Ayres of Adams Central (Info Graphic)
- Kayden Sipp of Adams Central (Newspaper Layout)
- Freya Venteicher of Northwest (Photo/Artistic Illustration)
- Aldan McKnight of Plattsmouth (Feature Photography)
- Kipley Kuecker of Lexington (Yearbook Layout)
- Beatriz Montiel-Carranza of Lexington (Broadcast News Story and Broadcast Feature Story)
- Lydia Franklin and Madelyn Hughes of Adams Central (Broadcast Public Service Announcement)

CLASS C:

- Miranda Spady of Chase County (Advertising)
- Azalea Marshall of Mead (Newspaper Column Writing and Yearbook Theme Copy Writing)
- Shie King of Southwest (Editorial Cartooning)
- Lauryn VanDiest of Doniphan-Trumbull (Editorial Writing)
- Elizabeth Brennan of Mead (Entertainment Review Writing and Feature Photography)
- Mia Sherman of Stanton (Headline Writing)
- Madison Fenn of Yutan (Newspaper Feature Writing)
- Ksenia Bradford of Yutan (Newspaper News Writing)
- Jade Grasianni of Mead (Newspaper Sports Feature Writing)
- Hunter Williams of Mead (Sports News Writing)
- Alivia Dunaway of Mead (Yearbook Feature Writing)
- Max Novak of Dorchester (Yearbook Sports Feature Writing)
- Kylie Krajicek of Yutan (Info Graphic and Action Photography)
- Charlie Christensen, Kilah Pfeifer, Leilani Soto, Bailey Manka, Marissa Schwab, and Khloe Wheeler of Doniphan-Trumbull (In-Depth Newspaper Coverage)
- Brooklyn Espinoza of Stanton (Newspaper Layout)
- Paige Nickless of Chase County (Photo/Artistic Illustration)
- Ashtyn Anderson of Yutan (Yearbook Layout)
- Guadalupe Gabriel-Gomez, Haley Gimpel, and Cohen Reutzler of Harvard (Yearbook Theme Development)
- Camryn Engel of Doniphan-Trumbull (Broadcast News Story)
- Halle Arlt and Nicole Wacker of Yutan (Broadcast Sports Story)

Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

- Owen Littau and Bryer Almgren of Stuart (Broadcast Feature Story)
- Thomas Paxton and Kayde Ramm of Stuart (Broadcast Public Service Announcement)

*** At the State Journalism Competition, the NSAA recognized its Unified Journalists and their partners. Students from NRCSA-member schools were honored.**

CLASS B:

- Christian Arens of Conestoga (Action Photography and Feature Photography)
- Nery Rivera of Lexington (Feature Photography)
- Leyton Parra and Zephyr Mowinkel of Milford (Action Photography)
- Ethan Auwerda and Leon Sybrant of Ogallala (Broadcast News)
- Ethan Auwerda and Paeton Brown of Ogallala (Broadcast Feature)
- Ethan Auwerda of Ogallala (Editorial Writing)
- Tiffany Chaney of Pierce (Newspaper News)

CLASS C:

- Abigail Saunders of Centennial (Yearbook Sports Feature)
- Cali Santifer of Southern Valley (Advertising)
- Paisley Hammond of Southern Valley (Newspaper News)
- Berkley Martin and Sophie Lewis of Southern Valley (Broadcast Feature)
- Rose Bredthauer and Shaylee Meiestler-Lomasney of Wood River (Yearbook Sports Feature)
- Rose Bredthauer of Wood River (Action Photography)

*** Yutan was the Class C Journalism State Champion. Mead was the State Runner-up.**



YUTAN JOURNALISM

*** Eight of the NSAA's Believers and Achievers honorees were awarded \$1,000 Believers and Achievers Scholarships. Those from NRCSA-member schools are: Drew Schmaderer (Stuart), Shayleigh Coleman (Anselmo-Merna), Josie Ley (Wayne), Josey Moore (Ravenna), and Melia Gronemeyer (Tri County).**



BACK: Drew Schmaderer (2nd from left), Shayleigh Coleman (4th from left)
FRONT: Josie Ley (1st from left), Josey Moore (2nd from left), Melia Gronemeyer (right)

*** Matt Hinkel of Northwest High School was recognized as NETA's Veteran Teacher of the Year.**



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Callaway Public Schools



Mascot: Bears & Bobcats

Enrollment: 166 students

Location(s): Callaway, NE

Interesting Fact: In the last 10 years we have recognized 8 teachers for 30 years of service to our school district and we have a handful more that are close to that accomplishment. Callaway has traditionally been a place where teachers move in, put down roots, and raise their families. This longevity is a testament to our school's connection to the community and the commitment of the village of Callaway to foster support and ensure the success of our children.



Superintendent: J.D. Furrow

Principal(s): Heath Birkel - 7-12 Principal/AD; Brittany Jesseph - PK-6 Principal/SPED Director

Board of Education: Jim Phelps, President; Rhonda Pandorf, Vice President; Rebecca Eggleston, Secretary; Mike Reiff, Treasurer; TR Anderson; Liana Hrupek



Programs:

Our FCCLA chapter led by Charmayne Popp has grown to national prominence. Last year Ms. Popp took ___ kids to Orlando Florida to compete at the national convention with multiple teams winning awards and one team of repurpose/redesign winning national championship. The team of Kaygan Witthuhn, Cheney Dishman, and Angel Johnson presented a reading lamp created from retired books. This summer Ms. Popp will be taking 10 students to compete at the national convention in Washington D.C. Along with the success in competitions, Ms. Popp's students are impacting our community and school with many service activities, and she is building our communities next generation of leaders.

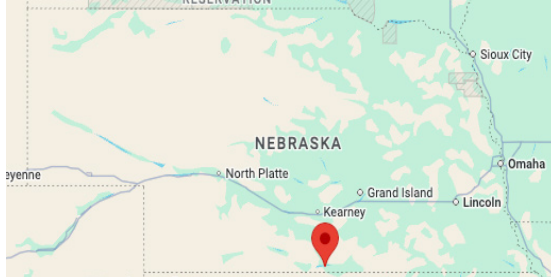
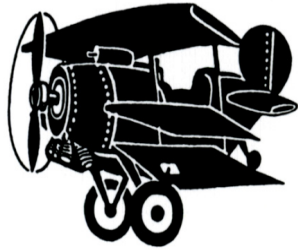
The second program I would highlight is our commitment as a school to social emotional learning and support structures we have put in place to not let kids fall through the cracks because there are no cracks. Mental health has been a big part of our MTSS evolution. We are very proud that our elementary SPED/SEL teacher, Karen Weverka, and elementary principal, Brittany Jesseph have been recognized by Character Strong. Karen and Brittany have been invited to receive an award for the school and to present at the national Character Strong convention in Seattle, WA this summer. It is very fulfilling to be recognized at such a high level for the work that is happening in our school, but the actual reward is the impact we see in our students.

These programs are just two of the many great things happening at Callaway. We pride ourselves on being a safe and nurturing environment that allows students to become the best version of themselves, inside and out. At Callaway we are "Creating Positive Stories" every day!



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Franklin Public Schools



Mascot: Flyers

Enrollment: 265 students

Location(s): Franklin, NE

Interesting Fact: Frank W. Cyr, the “Father of the Yellow School Bus” was born on a farm near Franklin, NE.

Mr. Cyr was instrumental in making the yellow bus with black lettering standard for all school buses. It was determined as easiest to see in the light of early morning and late afternoon. The Franklin County Museum has information on display in honor of Mr. Cyr.

Superintendent: Shelley Kahrs



Principal(s): Kelly Simmons & Christie Stratman

Board of Education: L to R: Erica Dorn; Lori Cole; Harley Scott; Derek Fouts; Mike Bartels; NOT pictured: Ryan Bonham

Programs:

Shelley Kahrs is serving her first year as superintendent at Franklin Public Schools, but she has been a consistent and valued member of the district for over 32 years. Having grown from a classroom teacher to an elementary principal and now a superintendent, she leads with a deep understanding of daily school life, ensuring every decision is grounded in what is best for students. Shelley’s leadership is best described as “all in.” She is deeply committed and focused on building strong, sustainable systems that support success regardless of who is leading them. Her clarity and vision foster an environment where staff feel supported, respected, and heard. Across the district, there is a renewed sense of energy, pride, and direction under her leadership. Behind the scenes, Shelley’s dedication and work ethic continue to move Franklin Public Schools forward in meaningful and lasting ways.



The Franklin community faces common rural barriers when connecting families to mental health supports. Franklin Public Schools recognizes this gap and has embraced its role as a trusted hub, providing not only mental health services but also essential resources that promote stability and well-being. To address these needs, the district has intentionally developed a comprehensive, team-based mental health system that supports students and families across all tiers. The addition of Ale’ Siel, Licensed Mental Health Practitioner (LMHP), has been instrumental in bridging access gaps, allowing students to receive services during the school day while reducing financial and logistical barriers for families. In partnership with the administration and the school counselor, Mercedes Collins, the district has strengthened a collaborative mental health team grounded in consistency, transparency, and shared responsibility. This approach unites multidisciplinary teams—including safety, crisis, and threat assessment—to proactively respond to student and family needs. As a result, Franklin Public Schools have strengthened student outcomes while fostering a deeper sense of connection, support, and resilience across the community.



Updates from Members & Other Entities

From NRCSA Executive Director Jack Moles: *NRCSA is backing the work of the Nebraska State College System and the Nebraska SMART program. This is a unique approach to providing free tutoring services to your students. Information on the program is provided below. This program is beneficial on many levels. Among them are:*

- *The program is FREE for kids and families.*
- *The program provides valuable experience for prospective teachers.*
- *The program provides a paying job for prospective teachers.*
- *The program provides another great connection between Chadron State, Peru State, and Wayne State with NRCSA member school districts. All three of the State Colleges are NRCSA members.*
- *The program provides an opportunity to connect prospective teachers with rural schools. Some of the tutors did not attend rural high schools and this provides an opportunity for them to connect with rural.*
- *The program provides an opportunity to connect YOUR school with prospective teachers. You may be in the market to hire one of these tutors in the future and this connection could help!*



Nebraska SMART Update

Free One-on-One Tutoring Now Available for All Nebraska Students

LAST DAY OF TUTORING: May 7
Monday - Thursday 3:30 to 8:30 PM CT

As we approach the final phase of grant funding for Nebraska SMART, your voice is more important than ever.

YOUR STORY MATTERS:

Help Showcase the Impact of Nebraska SMART

We are asking school administrators, teachers, and counselors to help us capture the true impact of Nebraska SMART by sharing a brief testimonial. Your firsthand experiences provide powerful insight into how the program is shaping classrooms, supporting students, and inspiring future educators across Nebraska.

Your perspective matters. It helps us demonstrate the program’s value to decision-makers and advocate for its future.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey here: [Testimonial Form](#).

Your responses will help us:

- Show how Nebraska SMART supports student learning and success
- Highlight its role in developing Nebraska’s future teachers
- Share meaningful stories and outcomes with decision-makers

We especially encourage you to include specific examples or stories. These personal insights bring the program to life in ways data alone cannot.

Nebraska SMART’s future depends on our ability to clearly show its impact, and that starts with voices like yours.

Thank you for your continued commitment to your students and for helping us tell this important story.

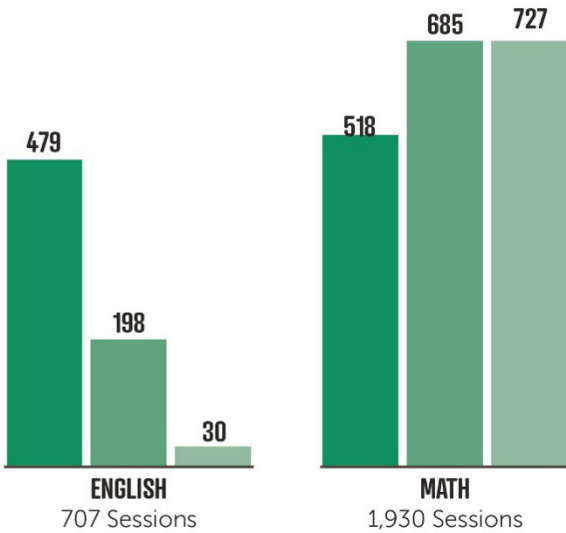
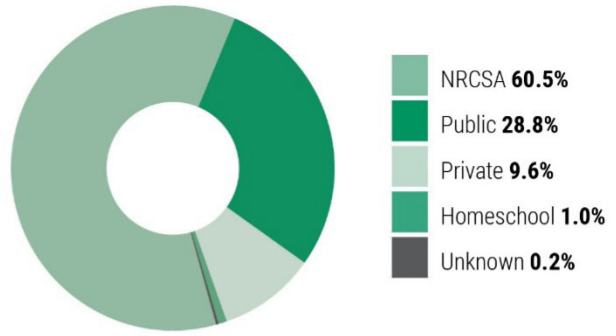
By the numbers

Nebraska SMART is helping students across the state reach their full academic potential through free, online tutoring available to all K–12 students. The program connects students with trained college tutors who provide personalized, one-on-one support in core subjects.

To date, Nebraska SMART tutors have completed more than **2,771** tutoring sessions, serving **1,047** students statewide. The program’s success is possible thanks to strong partnerships with schools and organizations across Nebraska, like NRCSA. These partnerships ensure that students, no matter where they live, have access to high-quality academic support.

1,047 STUDENTS SERVED

Since February 2024, 1,047 students have registered for free online tutoring with Nebraska SMART. The chart shows the distribution of students registered based on school type.



2,771 TUTORING SESSIONS COMPLETED

■ K-5th Grade ■ 6th - 8th Grade ■ 9th - 12th Grade

The Tutors have conducted 2,771 tutoring sessions, providing over 1,534 hours of tutoring to K-12 students across rural Nebraska. The graph shows a breakdown of tutoring by subject and grade level.



Nebraska SMART is helping students across the state reach their full academic potential through free, online tutoring available to all K–12 students. The program connects students with trained college tutors who provide personalized, one-on-one support in core subjects.

To date, Nebraska SMART tutors have completed more than **2,661** tutoring sessions, serving **1,029** students statewide. The program’s success is possible thanks to strong partnerships with schools and organizations across Nebraska, like NRCSA. These partnerships ensure that students, no matter where they live, have access to high-quality academic support.

To learn more or help your students get started, visit www.nscs.edu/nebraskasmart or contact Judi Yorges at [jyorges@nscs.edu](mailto: jyorges@nscs.edu).

As we hear concern from rural districts concerning moves in the national front regarding the Department of Education, the National Rural Education Association (NREA) and the National Education Association (NEA) have combined to share a website outlining the amount of federal funding that goes to public schools. The website can be accessed here:

[How Much Funding Does My Public School Get from the Federal Government](#)

Dr. Steven Johnson, a member of the NREA Executive Committee, provided a document entitled, “Strengthening Rural Communities Through Public Education”. Many of you had an opportunity to meet Steve at the NRCSA Spring Conference. His article may be accessed here:

[Strengthening Rural Communities Through Public Education](#)

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, along with the Food Research and Action Center, has drawn attention to the possibility that the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) might be substantially altered. This change could have a negative impact on several school districts in Nebraska. The following website provides a great overview of the concern and allows the viewer to go specifically to Nebraska to see how the change could affect districts.

[State by State Fact Sheet](#)

The ESUCC and ESU 3 have shared a document which outlines all of the trainings and mandates that are required of districts. The document, “School District Plans, Policies, and Annual Trainings Requirements”, is a handy reminder for districts. Thanks to ESUCC Executive Director Kraig Lofquist and ESU 3 Administrator Dan Schnoes for developing and distributing this handy tool. The document may be accessed here:

[School District Plans, Policies, & Annual Trainings](#)

Jeremy Braden, Superintendent at Doniphan-Trumbull, has developed a useful agenda for onboarding new Board of Education members. Many of our districts will bring on new Board members in January. Jeremy’s instrument could be a nice template for Superintendents and Board Presidents to use in working with new Board members. It may be accessed here:

[Board Member Onboarding](#)

From Rebecca Vogt, UNL

Today we are releasing the first of the reports from the 2024 Rural Poll, focusing on the well-being of rural Nebraskans. The report can be accessed online. The press release for this report can be found here.

[Well Being of Rural Nebraskans](#)

From Jay Martin, NDE Director of School Safety & Security

Hello All,

Time for the home stretch to the end of another school year! I hope it all goes well with all the events planned this spring.

Below you will find the School Safety Newsletter and information. The main question to look for is a Threat Assessment Survey. We are gaging schools' interest in future Threat Assessment trainings. The last page has a breakdown of the three Threat Assessment trainings offered by UNLPPC. Please take a moment to complete this survey by April 15, 2025.

Remember to apply for your Diamond status Safety Badge to display at your school letting your school community know you "Place School Safety First!"

Thanks for all you do in school safety.

[School Safety Newsletter Spring 2025](#)

UNL Extension Center: Embracing Innovation: Exploring the Dynamics of New Partnerships

Developing business & Industry, organizational, and postsecondary partnerships with school districts can play a pivotal role in enriching the educational experience, supporting student achievement, and strengthening connections between schools and their communities. By leveraging external resources, expertise, and support, schools can create a more inclusive, engaging, and supportive learning environment for all students. While partnerships within school districts can bring numerous benefits, there are also challenges that may be encountered. These can be overcome by fostering a culture of collaboration, prioritizing communication and relationship-building, seeking creative funding solutions, and promoting equity and inclusivity in partnership efforts. Additionally, leveraging support from district leadership, community stakeholders, and external resources can help schools overcome obstacles and maximize the benefits of collaborative partnerships.

We in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR), specifically the College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources (CASNR) and Nebraska Extension 4-H, believe this strategy for K-12 partnerships will result in a strong learning innovation network of support for every learner and every educator in the state of Nebraska. The world of higher education is evolving, driven by changes in technology, demographics, workforce demands, and societal expectations. To meet the needs of today's learners in the 21st century and prepare them for the challenges of tomorrow, we are embracing innovation, collaboration, and a student-centered approach.

In recent years, CASNR has created two new positions to help in this work. Dr. Tammy Mittelstet (tmittelstet@unl.edu) is serving as the CASNR Statewide Education and Career Pathways Coordinator and Bailey Feit (bailey.feit@unl.edu) serves as the LPS/CASNR Early College and Career Pathways Coordinator. They engage in co-creating education and career pathways for students and supporting teachers by:

- creating opportunities and minimizing barriers for all learners in the exploration of education and career pathways,
- investing in and supporting teachers to innovate and integrate cross-curricular concepts of Food, Energy, Water, and Societal Systems (FEWSS) throughout K-12 education,
- encouraging our higher education institutions to share content expertise to build curriculum that will inform best practices in the areas of FEWSS and mentor future systems thinkers for the continuum of learners through our higher education institutions,
- connecting and developing a team of community leaders to build partnerships that combine resources to support student and teacher innovation, and
- building a workforce of tomorrow with the support of the industry of today by developing work-based learning opportunities.

If you would like to get monthly updates, consider signing up for the L.I.N.K.S. newsletter at <https://casnr.unl.edu/k-12-partners>.

Nebraska Extension brings University of Nebraska expertise and research in 8 key areas of impact directly to Nebraskans from all walks of life in each of the state's 93 counties. Nebraskans turn to Nebraska Extension to strengthen their families, inspire their communities, empower young people, conserve and protect natural resources and advance their farms, ranches and businesses. Nebraska 4-H represents one of the eight key areas, and has been a leader in the career and college readiness field by being one of the first in the country to support a statewide educator position and team to provide leadership in program development and delivery.

The National Rural Education Association (NREA) is proud to release Why Rural Matters 2025—the 11th edition in a long-standing series of reports that examine the contexts and conditions of rural education across all 50 states. This report continues the critical mission of drawing attention to the urgent need for policymakers, educators, and communities to address rural education challenges and opportunities within their own states.

Since its inception, the Why Rural Matters series has sought to make publicly available data more accessible and actionable. The overarching goal remains clear: to promote informed, civil dialogue about our shared civic responsibility to ensure that every student—rural or urban—has access to high-quality educational opportunities.

New in this year's edition is the inclusion of Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) schools. In his topical essay, Alex Red Corn provides critical insights into the significance of BIE schools, which educate students from multiple tribes and nations with unique histories and cultures. The report carefully distinguishes between "states" proper and BIE schools while underscoring their shared place in the broader rural education landscape. The analyses and data presented in Why Rural Matters 2025 are intended to inform policy discussions, guide decision-making, and inspire action. The report highlights states that have demonstrated measurable progress over time, highlighting examples where thoughtful policy interventions have led to improved outcomes for rural students. These stories of progress offer valuable lessons and serve as evidence that strategic, context-sensitive policies can make a tangible difference in the lives of rural learners.

Data used in Why Rural Matters 2025 come from public sources: the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the United States Department of Education, the U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

The National Rural Education Association is proud to launch the 2025 Why Rural Matters report, a project with a more than 20-year history of shaping the conversation about rural education. First conceptualized by the Rural Schools and Community Trust, the report has evolved into a vital resource for policymakers, educators, and communities. Today, NREA carries this important work forward, ensuring that the voices, needs, and strengths of rural schools and students remain at the forefront of education policy and practice nationwide. We are also grateful to the Rural Schools Collaborative, whose continued support strengthens NREA's work on behalf of rural schools, educators, and students across the country.

I would encourage you to take a look at WHY RURAL MATTERS, which can be accessed here:

[Why Rural Matters 2025](#)

The National Rural Education Association (NREA) partnered with AASA in producing a report on REAP. REAP is a program that benefits many of our smaller districts. The report can be accessed here:

<https://www.aasa.org/docs/default-source/resources/reports/rural-education-achievement-program-survey-report.pdf>

Understanding REAP



The NCA & Proactive Coaching partner to bring Coach Bruce Brown's legendary insights about the parent's role in education-based athletics to your school & community.

Book your School's Presentation

Parent Meetings or Special Events

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN EDUCATION-BASED ATHLETICS

PRESENTED BY DARIN BOYSEN, NCA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"Outstanding information, well delivered. There were times I thought he was talking directly to me, which is a sign of a great communicator. I personally feel I'm better today than yesterday as a sports parent because I was able to listen to this message." – Parent & School Board Member



Before the Season

What do Athletes/Kids Really Want?

Releasing Your Son/Daughter to the Experience

Parental Red Flags

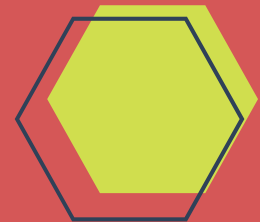


During the Game/Event

Modeling Appropriate Behavior

Big Picture

One Instructional Voice



After the Game/Event

Time & Space

Confidence Building

Relationship Building

Six Powerful Words

NEBRASKA COACHES ASSOCIATION

500 Charleston St, Ste 2, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

402-310-5472 | darin@ncacoach.org

Official Association Endorsements as of September 1





Nebraska School Administrators & School Board Members,

The Nebraska Coaches Association (NCA) is excited to announce a partnership with Proactive Coaching to bring Coach Bruce Brown's legendary insights about "The Role of Parents in Education-Based Athletics" to your school and community. Please see the attached flyer for highlights/focus of the in-person presentation.

NCA Executive Director, Darin Boysen, will begin travel across Nebraska multiple times throughout the 2024-2025 school year to deliver this powerful and passionate message. The NCA, Proactive Coaching and Darin are partnering to bring this message to your school at a **50% discounted rate from the standard Proactive Coaching in-person booking fee.**

Presentation Details:

45-Minute Parent Presentation with One School or Combined Schools

- Single school presentations are recommended but not required
- One presentation = one fee (no additional fee for schools merging)

Audio/Visual Requirements from the Host School:

- Overhead Projector with HDMI Connection
- Screen or Scoreboard Display
- Microphone

Cost – Payable the Day of Presentation:

- Within 75 miles of Lincoln/150 miles Round Trip
 - \$750 flat rate
- Beyond 75 miles of Lincoln/150 miles Round Trip
 - \$750 flat rate
 - 50 Cents per mile Round-Trip -OR- Cost of a Rental Vehicle/Gas
 - In some cases, a rental car may be cheaper for longer distances
 - Hotel Expense – if needed
- **Please Note:** Working together with other area schools to book separately on consecutive days of the week can greatly save travel and lodging expenses

The following booklets authored by Bruce Brown will be available for purchase for \$5 each (15% discount) after the presentation or ordered by the school in advance:

- *The Role of Parents in Athletics*
- *Playing with Confidence*
- *Life Lessons for Athletes*

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding the presentation or booking a date.

All the best,

Darin Boysen

Darin Boysen
Nebraska Coaches Association

Official Association Endorsements – as of September 1



The National Rural Education Association, of which NRCSA is a member, works closely with the the Committee for Education Funding (CEF) on federal policy issues. Following is an update on education issues on the federal level from CEF:

I. Policy Intelligence and Education News

Department of Education's website is periodically offline – The Department of Education's (ED's) website (www.ed.gov) has been repeatedly offline today, with some of the career and technical education and adult education sites down since last night. I asked the education authorizing committee and Appropriations Committee staffers if this is related to the government shutdown and having no staff there to fix a technical problem or is this a statement of the Administration's intention to close ED; apparently it is an inadvertent technical issue. I wouldn't normally assume nefarious intentions, but this year has demonstrated that the Administration is working to dismantle ED from within. The website glitches serve to as a reminder that if there is information on the ED website that you regularly use, you should download it and save it elsewhere.

Judge extends order halting layoffs of federal employees during the shutdown – Yesterday a federal judge extended her original order that temporarily stopped the Administration from firing federal employees during the shutdown, which had included about 465 employees at ED. The Administration is now prohibited from making a reduction in force (RIF) during the government shutdown. So those employees given RIF notices in early October now likely have their jobs for the time being but most are furloughed and not being paid. See [CNBC article](#) for details.

Government shutdown continues – The government has been mostly shut down for more than four weeks now, with apparently no high-level talks about how to resolve the conflicts; the House has been in recess since mid-September. Proposals to pay specific groups of federal employees – those still working, or those at specific agencies – and to continue funding specific programs – such as SNAP benefits – have not passed the Senate. The impacts of the shutdown will be felt more widely this week as federal employees except for troops get no October paycheck, the Administration is not using a contingency fund to pay SNAP benefits on November 1 so 42 million beneficiaries will be without income for food, some federally supported programs that had been kept open this month with leftover funds will shut down, and Obamacare health care premiums for 2026 get posted that do not include a subsidy that

is expiring. These actions result from choices that Congress and the Administration are making. When there is a will to spend federal funds – for instance, for billions of dollars of tax breaks in Republicans' bill this summer, for an emergency response or financial bailout – or to cut funds – for instance, for student loans, for research, for SNAP benefits or Medicaid - Congress can pass legislation that spends more or cuts funding, or that provides a tax break or tax increase.

Fact sheets from House Appropriations Committee Republicans and Democrats – Yesterday both House Appropriations Committee Democrats and Republicans posted material that bolster their opposing positions:

Republican press release listing 300+ groups supporting the House-passed funding bill to reopen the government – The [press release](#) lists hundreds of organizations that support the House-passed bill, including many representing agricultural and business interests, the airline industry, chambers of commerce, veterans groups, and conservative interest organizations.

Democratic [fact sheet](#) about how Administration actions “make their shutdown more painful” – The Democratic fact sheet lists three ways that the Administration's actions are making the shutdown more painful for Americans: the mass layoffs announced in early October (now paused due to the District Court judge mentioned above, but I'd expect the Administration to appeal); executive orders to cancel funding to specific cities or state led by Democrats; and delaying or withholding funding for programs that have a source of funding available, like SNAP and some emergency assistance programs.

Three years ago, NRCSA began a Principal Search Service. This service is patterned after our successful Superintendent Search Service. Two options are available. Both options will involve NRCSA consultants recruiting candidates for the position. One option will involve the NRCSA consultant making background calls, while the reduced version of the service will place that role with the Superintendent. If you are interested in getting more information about the service now, please contact Jack. Here is a brochure outlining the service.

[NRCSA Principal Search Brochure](#)

Chadron State College Special Education Para-to-Teacher Program Initiative.

Purpose: This “Grow Your Own” Special Education Teacher program is designed to provide school districts with the opportunity to cultivate and participate in the training of their para-professionals who wish to continue their education to become special education teachers.

Who: Any individual who holds a minimum of an Associate’s Degree (or equivalent credit hours) from an accredited higher education institution, and who is employed as a para-professional within a school district. **What:** Chadron State will provide required course work and enrichment activities via online, face-to-face (via Zoom), and on the job experiential learning, leading to a Bachelor’s in Education Degree, and a Nebraska Teaching Certificate with an endorsement in Special Education (grades PK-12). With administrator input, program course work will be tailored to best fit your district practices and expectations. Each course will be offered in an 8-week format, with 12-13 credit hours to be completed each 16 week semester.

How: Program participants will be advised, monitored, and supported by CSC faculty/staff, and a CSC Education Program liaison is specifically assigned to facilitate their progress. District para-professionals may enter the program at any time in the academic year.

When: once participants reach their senior academic year they will embark on completing their capstone course work, via online and Zoom class sessions. This course work has been pared down considerably with the understanding and assumption that these student teachers will be learning “on-the-job”. For example, one section covers classroom management practices. Clearly, one can argue and attest that these student teacher interns are learning more about managing a classroom from being mentored by veteran teachers within your school, and observing them in action. This is the belief and learning approach embraced during this senior year. However, to ensure and assess concept learning, Chadron State faculty will be meeting with your student teacher cohort twice per week for 1.5 hours, via Zoom conferencing technology.

Graduation: At the completion of this program students/candidates graduate from Chadron State College, and apply for teaching licensure resulting in a valid initial teaching certificate with and endorsement in PK-12 Special Education. Chadron State’s education program is nationally and State accredited. As such, interstate certification reciprocity is not a problem.

Things for your consideration:

- 1) To qualify for this program participants must hold at least an Associate’s Degree or the equivalent in college credit hours. *(CSC will work with those applicants to provide them with the needed coursework leading up to program entry).*
- 2) Districts must agree to maintain para-professional employment throughout the course of the program—including during the student teaching experience.

Please contact Dr. Adam Fette for more program information, at afette@csc.edu.

NRCSA developed a corporate sponsorship/partnership program. The program is designed to provide our corporate partners with more opportunities for contact with the decision makers in our member school districts, ESUs, and the colleges through increased exposure. Corporate partners are able to choose among three levels of sponsorship: Purple Ribbon Partners, Blue Ribbon Friends, and Red Ribbon Sponsors. Different forms of contact with our members are made available in each of the three levels.

We are very pleased to partner with our corporate sponsors, and NRCSA is so very thankful that each of you has chosen to partner with us.

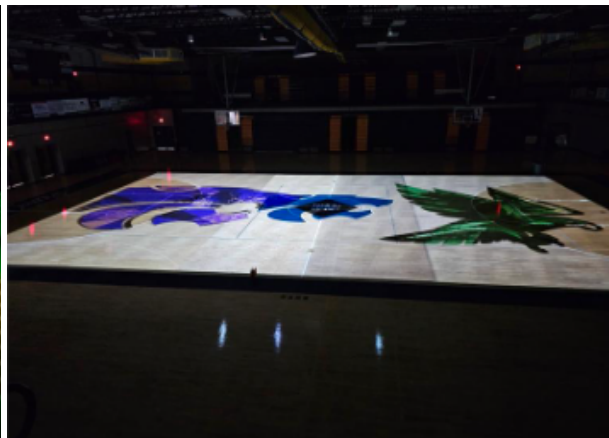


Whether on the turf or the hardwood, the modern high school sports experience is evolving far beyond the final score. Today, athletic departments are recognizing that a truly immersive environment, one that captivates a digital-native student body, is essential for building lasting school spirit.

While mascots and music have long been the pillars of game-day atmosphere, a new technological frontier has emerged: advanced LED field lighting and indoor on-court color mapping. This transition from static, industrial yellow light to dynamic, high-definition color is fundamentally changing how communities experience "Friday Night Lights" as well as create new revenue opportunities through sponsorship and advertising.

By synchronizing stadium lighting with player introductions, key momentum shifts, and halftime shows, schools are creating a professional-grade spectacle that rivals collegiate arenas. This technology does more than just wow the crowd; it fosters a psychological home-team advantage, creating an intimidating, high-energy environment that energizes athletes and keeps families engaged in the stands.

Furthermore, the shift toward modern LED systems serves a dual purpose for school districts. Beyond the aesthetic "wow factor," these systems provide a significantly safer, glare-free playing environment that reduces shadows and improves visual clarity for student-athletes. In addition to these safety improvements, the system's high energy efficiency and low maintenance requirements provide a secondary benefit: significant long-term savings that can be reinvested back into the students and programs that need it most.



VOSS

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Apptegy

Alex Brownstein
2201 Brookwood Dr, Suite 115
Little Rock, AR 72202
Phone: (832) 722.3053
conferenceteam@apptegy.com



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INTERNATIONAL
TRUCKS

Cornhusker International Trucks

Russ Folts
3131 Cornhusker Hwy
Lincoln, NE 68504
Phone: (402) 304-4016
russ.folts@cornhuskerinternational.com



Cheever Construction

Doug Klute
3425 N 44th St
Lincoln, NE 68504
Phone: (402) 477-6745
dklute@cheeverconstruction.com



DA Davidson

Paul Grieger
450 Regency Parkway, Suite 400
Omaha, NE 68114
Phone: (402) 392-7984
pgrieger@dadco.com



Clark Enersen Partners

Steve Miller
1010 Lincoln Mall, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508
Phone: (402) 430-3803
steve.miller@clarkenersen.com



DLR Group

Emily O'keeffe
6457 Frances St, Suite 200
Omaha, NE 68106
Phone: (402) 393-4100
eokeeffe@dlrgroup.com



CMBA Architects

Troy Keilig
208 N Pine ST, Ste 301
Grand Island, NE 68801
Phone: (308) 384-4444
keilig.t@cmbaarchitects.com



Facility Advocates

Dave Raymond
3738 S 149th St, Suite 102
Omaha, NE 68144
Phone: (402) 206-8777
draymond@facilityadvocates.com



Purple Ribbon Partners



construction | the people you build with

MCL Construction

Travis Justice
14558 Portal Circle
Omaha, NE 68138
Phone: (402) 339-2221
tkj@mcconstruction.com



Network For Educator Effectiveness (NEE)

Marc Doss
288 Maguire Blvd
Columbia, MO 65211
Phone: (844) 793-4357
dossm@missouri.edu



Roofing and Building Maintenance

Tremco Roofing

Jim Wolfsohn
3735 Green Road
Beachwood, OH 44122
Phone: (909) 302-0617
jim.jwolfsohn@tremcoinc.com



Voss Lighting

Mike Little
4624 S 140th St
Omaha, NE 68137
Phone; (402) 850-9789
mike.little@vosslighting.com



WILKINS

ARCHITECTURE | DESIGN | PLANNING

Wilkins Architecture, Design, Planning

Jacob Sertich
2204 University Dr, Suite 130
Kearney, NE 68845
Phone: (308) 237-5787
jsertich@wilkinsadp.com



Blue Ribbon Supporters



Albireo Energy



Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska



Hausmann Construction



Johnson Controls



Kearney Visitors Bureau



K 12 Coalition



Navitas



Northland Securities



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Rasmussen Mechanical Services



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US Bank



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BD Construction

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BVH ARCHITECTURE

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Education

Franklin Covey Education

MID-WEST ROOFING AND SHEET METAL CO.

Mid - West Roofing & Sheet Metal



On to College



RMV Construction



Sampson Construction



Student Assurance Services



Trane Technologies

Contact Information

NRCSA

Jack Moles, Executive Director
(402) 335-7732
jmoles@nrcea.net

Jeff Bundy, Office Manager
(402) 202-6028
jbundy@nrcea.net

Legislative Contacts

U.S. Senators

[Deb Fischer](#)

[Pete Ricketts](#)

U.S. House of Representatives

[Don Bacon](#)

[Mike Flood](#)

[Adrian Smith](#)

Nebraska Governor

[Jim Pillen](#)

NE State Senators

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[John Arch, Dist 14](#)

[Christy Armendariz, Dist 18](#)

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[Machaela Cavanaugh, Dist 6](#)

[Robert Clements, Dist 2](#)

[Stan Clouse, Dist 37](#)

[Danielle Conrad, Dist 46](#)

[Wendy DeBoer, Dist 10](#)

[Barry DeKay, Dist 40](#)

[Myron Dorn, Dist 30](#)

[Robert Dover, Dist 19](#)

[George Dugan, Dist 26](#)

[John Fredrickson, Dist 20](#)

[Dunixi Guereca, Dist 7](#)

[Bob Hallstrom, Dist 1](#)

[Ben Hansen, Dist 16](#)

[Brian Hardin, Dist 48](#)

[Rick Holderoft, Dist 36](#)

[Jana Hughes, Dist 24](#)

[Megan Hunt, Dist 8](#)

[Teresa Ibach, Dist 44](#)

[Mike Jacobson, Dist 42](#)

[Margo Juarez, Dist 5](#)

[Kathleen Kauth, Dist 31](#)

[Loren Lippincott, Dist 34](#)

[Dan Lonowski, Dist 33](#)

[Dan McKeon, Dist 41](#)

[Terrell McKinney, Dist 11](#)

[Glen Meyer, Dist 17](#)

[Mike Moser, Dist 22](#)

[Dave Murman, Dist 38](#)

[Jason Prokop, Dist 27](#)

[Dan Quick, Dist 35](#)

[Jane Raybould, Dist 28](#)

[Merv, Riepe, Dist 12](#)

[Victor Roundtree, Dist 3](#)

[Rita Sanders, Dist 45](#)

[Tony Sorrentino, Dist 39](#)

[Ashlei Spivey, Dist 13](#)

[Tonya Storer, Dist 43](#)

[Jared, Storm, Dist 23](#)

[Paul Strommen, Dist 47](#)

[Brad Von Gillern, Dist 4](#)

[Dave Wordekemper, Dist 15](#)



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NRCSA Rural Community Schools Association
440 S 13th St, Suite B
Lincoln, NE 68508



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