



Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

Member Update

June 5, 2025



Photo Credit: Doniphan-Trumbull Public Schools



www.nrcsa.net



[www.twitter.com/NRCSA1980](https://twitter.com/NRCSA1980)



www.facebook.com/nrcsahome/



NRCSA Calendar

NRCSA Events

NRCSA Golf Tournament

July 22, 2025

Meadowlark Hills Golf Course in Kearney

[More about this event](#)

NRCSA New Superintendent Lunch

July 23, 2025

At Administrator Days

Time & location TBD

NRCSA District Meetings

August to October 2025

Dates, times, & locations TBD

NRCSA Legislative Forum

February 26, 2026

Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln

[More about this event](#)

NRCSA Spring Conference

March 18 & 20, 2026

Crowne Plaza & Younes North Convention Center in
Kearney

[More about this event](#)

Committee Meetings

NRCSA Executive Committee

June 18, 2025, 10:00 AM Mountain Time

Ogallala Public Schools

2025-26 NRCSA Executive Committee

July 23, 2025

At Administrator Days

Time & Location TBD



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.



Boyd County Schools
Search Complete



Lawrence-Nelson Public Schools
Search Complete



Pawnee City Public Schools
Search Complete



Shelton Public Schools
Search Complete

Access the Members area of www.nrcsa.net anytime.
Login: member Password: learning

NRCSA Updates



The 2025 regular session of the Unicameral is now completed. The legislature adjourned sine die on Monday, June 2. While there were passed bills still needing the Governor's signature, he indicated he would not veto any of the remaining adopted bills. NRCSA's final summary may be accessed here:

[NRCSA's Bill Summaries](#)

We had several leadership positions that needed to be filled for the 2025-26 school year. Some positions are elected, while some committee positions are appointed. Positions that were filled via elections:

PRESIDENT-ELECT Stephanie Kaczor of Riverside was chosen as the President-Elect.

SECRETARY Jeremy Braden of Doniphan-Trumbull was elected as Secretary to the Executive Committee.

SOUTHEAST DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE Andy Havelka of Freeman was elected as the Southeast District Representative to the Executive Committee..

WEST DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE Ginger Meyer, of Chadron was elected as the West District Representative to the Executive Committee.

We will also be filling vacancies that come about in the Legislative Committee, Scholarship and Recognition Committee, Closing the Achievement Gap Committee, and Rural Teacher Committee. Executive Director Jack Moles will recommend people to fill positions based on interest expressed by potential candidates. The Executive Committee will approve appointments at its June meeting.

NRCSA's annual membership drive will begin in July. Annual Dues remain at \$850. Notices will be sent in time for July board meetings. You are welcome to pay your dues in this fiscal year or the next. Last year we had 224 school districts, ESU's, and State colleges and we expect to continue our annual growth. Thanks to you for being a member. This energizes our representation and advocacy for rural Nebraska, no matter who we are engaged with on education, legislation, or community issues. Without your support, there is less rural advocacy. Whether we like it or not, the outstate and rural population does not create a legislative majority anymore. In fact, rural Nebraska lost another seat in the Unicameral in the most recent redistricting. Finding success,

NRCSA Leadership

Dr. Heather Nebesniak, President.
Ord Public Schools

Mark Lenihan, Past President.
Wayne Community Schools

Chris Kuncl, Pres-Elect.
Mullen Public Schools

Chris Prososki, Secretary.
Southern School District # 1

District Representatives:

Eugene Hanks, West
Crawford Public Schools

Dale Hafer, North Central
Ainsworth Community Schools

Daryl Schunk, Northeast
Randolph Public Schools

Paul Sheffield, Southeast
Exeter-Milligan 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:

Tim Heckenlively,
Falls City Public Schools

Jim Widdifield
Minden Public Schools

whether passing, amending, or stopping legislation comes from membership, relationships, and focus. Thanks to your membership in NRCSA, rural is at the table and making a difference on behalf of our rural students, schools, and communities.

NRCSA SPRING CONFERENCE

We continue to celebrate the recipients of the NRCSA “Outstanding Awards” who were recognized at the NRCSA Spring Conference. They were:

- OUTSTANDING ELEMENTARY TEACHER: Kari Schroeder, Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca
- OUTSTANDING SECONDARY TEACHER: Kimberly Bender, Humphrey
- OUTSTANDING MUSIC TEACHER: Kim Hammer, Weeping Water
- OUTSTANDING ESU STAFF MEMBER: Scott Jones, ESU 16
- OUTSTANDING CLASSIFIED STAFF MEMBER: Juli Klingelhoef, Amherst
- OUTSTANDING PRINCIPAL: Keri Homan, Crawford
- OUTSTANDING BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER: Mike Stracke, Stuart
- OUTSTANDING SUPERINTENDENT: Dale Hafer, Ainsworth



DALE HAFER



KERI HOMAN



SCOTT JONES



JULI KLINGELHOEFER



KIM HAMMER



*KARI SCHROEDER (ALSO GARY ANDERSON,
2000 NRCSA OUTSTANDING PRINCIPAL)*



KIMBERLY BENDER



MIKE STRACKE

Also at the NRCSA Spring Conference, KSB School Law and the Perry Law Firm were honored as the 2025 NRCSA Friend of Rural Education Award recipients.



REPRESENTATIVES OF KSB SCHOOL LAW & PERRY LAW FIRM—RECIPIENTS OF THE FRIEND OF RURAL EDUCATION AWARD

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.

This year we have already assisted the Boards of Education at Lawrence-Nelson, Boyd County, Pawnee City, and

Shelton in their Superintendent searches.

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.

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@nrdsa.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 Experience](#)

[NRCSA Planning Support Brochure](#)

2025 NRCSA Joe Toczek Golf Tournament

The 2025 NRCSA Joe Toczek Golf Tournament will be held on Tuesday, July 22, 2025 at Meadowlark Hills Golf Course in Kearney. The event is open to administrators, both active and retired, board members and vendors. Registration opened in late May. We are planning for up to 50 teams (200 golfers) to participate in the tournament. Registration materials were sent via email later this month.

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](#)

One of the more outstanding student academic activities that I've had the pleasure of working with is Academic Decathlon. The nation-wide program provides a prescribed course of study each year. Teams are made up of students of different academic abilities. Students with an "A" average compete against other students with an "A" average, students with a "B" average compete against other students with a "B" average, and students with a "C" average compete against other students with a "C" average. Schools can choose how they prepare for competitions. Some teams meet after school or in the evenings, while some schools offer a class.

There is a regional competition in January, with the State Championships being held in February. Students compete for medals at both events. Scholarships are awarded to members of teams who are successful in the competitions. Three of my four children competed in Academic Decathlon and between them were awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships.

This past year, two NRCSA-member schools qualified for the State Championship: Amherst and Johnson County Central.

Each year there is a central theme for the Academic Decathlon curriculum. For the 2025-25 school year, the theme is "The Roaring 20's". Music, art, and literature will cover the Jazz Age.

If you would like get more information on the Nebraska Academic Decathlon, please contact NRCSA Executive Director Jack Moles or one of the Nebraska Academic Decathlon Co-Executive Directors:

Ardis Moody ardis.moody@gmail.com

Cris Hay-Merchant chaymerchant@bellevue.edu



JOHNSON COUNTY CENTRAL ACADEMIC DECATHLON TEAM



AMHERST ACADEMIC DECATHLON TEAM

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 for the 2024-25 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. Application materials for Spring scholarships were distributed to member Superintendents and ESU Administrators, who were then asked to share with potential candidates in their buildings. The NRCSA Scholarship and Recognitions Committee selected the three Spring semester scholarship winners.

Applications for the 2026 Spring semester scholarships will be open in the fall, at a date to be determined.

NRCSA Executive Director Jack Moles visited Fairbury, Harvard, and Summerland to make the scholarship presentations of the Fall scholarships. The three recipients are Mary LeFave of Fairbury, Ryan Kile of Harvard, and Shayna Strobe of Summerland.

Ryan Kile is currently a paraeducator at Harvard High School. He is working on a teaching certificate in Secondary Business Education through Chadron State College.

Mary LeFave is currently a paraeducator at Fairbury High School. She is working on a teaching certificate in 7-12 Biology through the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Shayna Strobe is currently a paraeducator at Summerland Elementary School. She is working on a teaching certificate in Elementary Education through Chadron State College.



FAIRBURY SUPT DEVIN EMBRAY, MARY LEFAVE, JACK MOLES



HARVARD SUPT MICHAEL DERR, RYAN KILE, JACK MOLES



SUMMERLANDE SUPT. MOLLY ASCHOFF, ELEM PRINCIPAL CATHY COOPER, SHAYNA STROPE, JACK MOLES

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 this “early” 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. 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).

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 128 such meetings. I most recently attended the Board meetings at Wakefield and Allen on May 12.

I am scheduled to attend the following Board of Education meetings in the near future:

Wednesday, June 11: Emerson-Hubbard

Monday, June 16: Perkins County

I have really enjoyed attending meetings 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.



WAKEFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION



ALLEN BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION



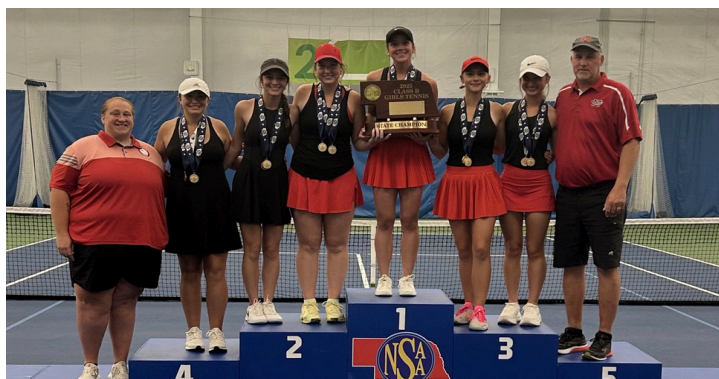
NRCSA wishes to share in the celebration of the special accomplishments and recognitions going on in our member schools and ESUs.

June 2025:

*** Several seniors from NRCSA-member schools were recognized in the Omaha World-Herald's All-Academic Recognitions. Among the more highly recognized:**

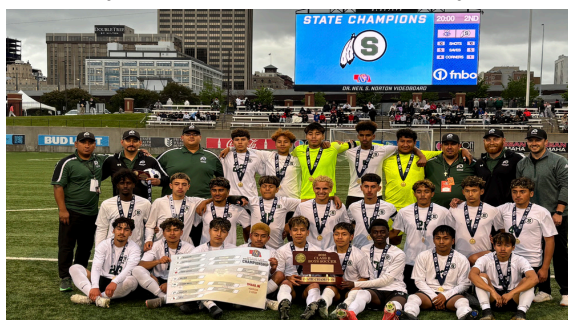
- ALL EASTERN ACADEMIC FIRST TEAM: Jordyn Clinchard of Wayne.
- ALL WEST-CENTRAL ACADEMIC FIRST TEAM: Kit Brooks of Central City, Taylor Burge of Gothenburg, Patrick Bursaw of Ravenna, George Colton of Chase County, Ryder Potts of Perkins County, Austin Schmidt of Heartland, Logan Spence of Boone Central, Nicholas Weides of Holdrege
- ALL EASTERN ACADEMIC SECOND TEAM: Norah Armstrong of Wayne, Olivia Hanson of Wayne, Joe Burns of Arlington, Sarah Lange of Raymond Central
- ALL WEST-CENTRAL ACADEMIC FIRST TEAM: Katie Abbott of Hershey, Caleb Rowe of Central City, Parker Walahoski of Overton, Elliott Balcom of Northwest

*** McCook won the Class B Girls Tennis State Championship. Brooklynn Gillen of McCook was the Class B #2 Singles State Champion. Isabelle Clause and Roslyn Wiemers of McCook were the Class B #1 Doubles Champions.**



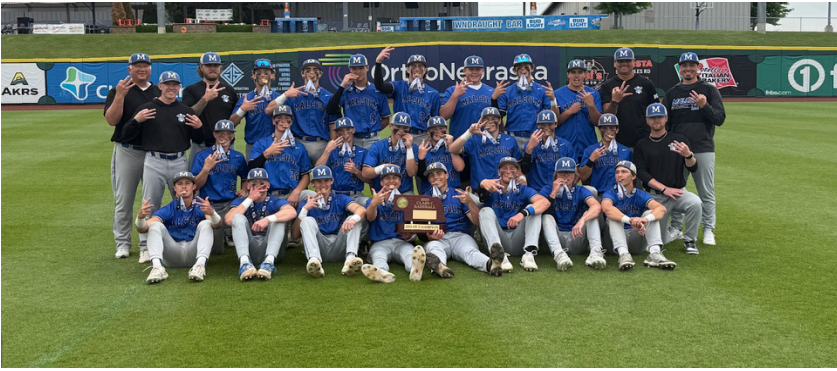
MCCOOK GIRLS TENNIS TEAM

*** Schuyler won the Class B Boys Soccer Championship.**



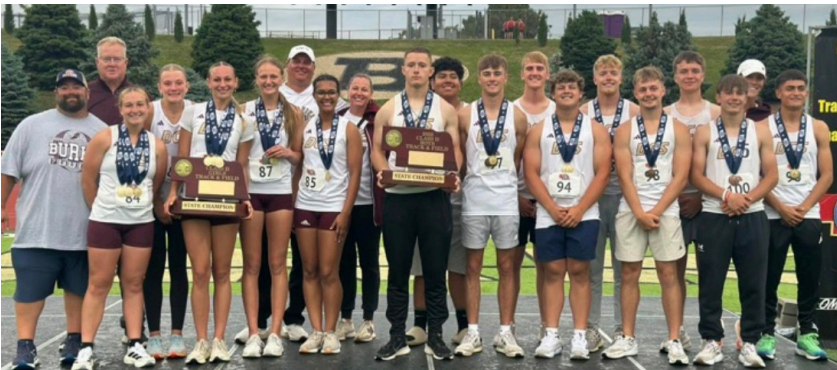
SCHUYLER BOYS SOCCER TEAM—1ST TIME STATE CHAMPIONS!

*** Malcolm won the Class C State Baseball Championship. The co-op of Central City and Centura finished as Runner-up.**



MALCOLM BASEBALL—THIRD CONSECUTIVE CLASS C STATE CHAMPIONSHIP!

*** Dundy County Stratton was the Class D State Champion in both Girls and Boys Track.**



DUNDY COUNTY STRATTON GIRLS AND BOYS TRACK TEAMS—BOTH CLASS D STATE CHAMPS!

*** Perkins County won the Class C Boys State Track championship. West Holt was the Runner-up.**



PERKINS COUNTY BOYS TRACK TEAM

*** Syracuse was the Class C Girls State Track Runner-up.**

*** Axtell was the Class D Boys State Track Runner-up.**

*** Athletes from NRCSA-member schools had great success at the State Track Meet. Individual and relay champions were:**

- ALL CLASS GOLD MEDALS: Boys Discus-Noah Rau, Chase County; Girls Shot Put-Kennedy Bailey, Dundy County Stratton; Boys High Jump-Isaac Cronin, Valentine; Boys Pole Vault-Boston Irish, Cozad, Girls 300

Hurdles-Addison Darnell, Auburn

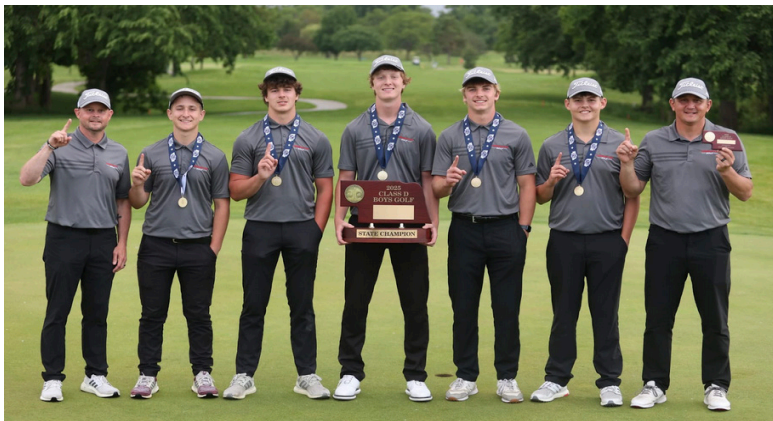
- CLASS B GIRLS: Discus-Erinn Briggs, Lakeview; 400-Story Rasby, Ogallala; 100-Kyra Ray, Northwest; 300 IH-Addison Darnell, Auburn; Boys High Jump-Isaac Cronin, Valentine; Boys Pole Vault-Boston Irish, Cozad; Girls 300 Hurdles-Addison Darnell, Auburn
- CLASS B BOYS: Triple Jump-Bryce Larsen, DC West; 100-Wyatt Dent, Central City; 4 x 100-Central City; Discus-Noah Rau, Chase County; Long Jump-Jonathon Reiners, Adams Central; Pole Vault-Boston Irish, Cozad;
- CLASS C GIRLS: 300 IH-Ashlynn Vestal, Syracuse; 800-Jayden Meyer, Syracuse; 1600-Madison Shaw, Sandy Creek; 4 x 100-West Holt; 4 x 400-West Holt; 4 x 800-Sandy Creek; Discus-Hallee Nickels, Johnson-Brock; High Jump-Trinity Chatfield, Ord; Shot Put-Jaid Wehrle, Battle Creek;
- CLASS C BOYS: 100-Tyrell Fennell, EMF; 200-Andy Ricchio, Battle Creek; 300 IH-Collin Hillman, Palmyra; 400-Brody Galyen, West Holt; 800-Nolan Gartner, Syracuse; 1600-Mason McGreer, Perkins County; 3200-Mason McGreer, Perkins County; 4 x 100-West Holt; 4 x 400-West Holt; Discus-Barrett Wilke, Stanton; High Jump-Isaac Cronin, Valentine; Long Jump-Zavier Mitchell, Alma; Pole Vault-Griffin Jordan, Madison; Shot Put-Barrett Wilke, Stanton; Triple Jump-Nash Morgan, Pender
- CLASS D GIRLS: 100-Clara Spargo, Dundy County Stratton; 200-Clara Spargo, Dundy County Stratton; 300 LH-Abigael Spargo, Dundy County Stratton; 400-Clara Spargo, Dundy County Stratton; 800-Myleigh Weers, Diller-Odell; 1600-Ashley Robertson, Wallace; 3200-Leah Dawson, McCool Junction; 4 x 100-Dundy County Stratton; 4 x 400-Maywood-Hayes Center; 4 x 800-Maywood-Hayes Center; Discus-Kennedy Bailey, Dundy County Stratton; High Jump-Marlea Donahey, Palmer; Pole Vault-Janna Roberts, Osceola; Shot Put-Kennedy Bailey, Dundy County Stratton; Triple Jump-Taylor McIntyre, Central Valley
- CLASS D BOYS: 100-Laken Wissink, Dundy County Stratton; 110 HH-Jake Halvorsen, Axtell; 200-Laken Wissink, Dundy County Stratton; 300 IH-Luke Bailey, Ansley-Litchfield; 400-Will Cacy, Arapahoe; 800-Luc Lopez, Axtell; 1600-Kael Garrett, Medicine Valley; 4 x 100-Dundy County Stratton; 4 x 400-Central Valley; 4 x 800-East Butler; Discus-Brock Bailey, Dundy County Stratton; High Jump-Brock McCarter, Overton; Long Jump-Maddox Wagoner, Kenesaw; Pole Vault-Gage Hammond, Southwest; Shot Put-Brock Bailey, Dundy County Stratton; Triple Jump-Brodey Spurling, High Plains

*** Several State and State Meet track records were set this year. Athletes from NRCSA-member schools had a hand in many of them. Included were:**

- Girls 100–Taylor McIntyre, Central Valley (Class D State and Class D State Meet records)
- Girls 200–Clara Spargo, Dundy County Stratton (Class D State and Class D State Meet records)
- Girls 400-Clara Spargo, Dundy County Stratton (Class D State and Class D State Meet record)
- Girls 300 Hurdles-Shaydyn Rasby, Ogallala (Class B State record)
- Girls 300 Hurdles-Addison Darnell, Auburn (Class B State Meet record)
- Girls 300 Hurdles-Abigael Spargo, Dundy County Stratton (Class D State Meet record)
- Boys 4 x 100 Relay-West Holt (Class C State and Class C State Meet records)
- Girls 4 x 100 Relay-Dundy County Stratton (Class D State Meet record)
- Boys 4 x 100 Relay–Dundy County Stratton (Class D State and Class D State Meet records)
- Boys 4 x 400 Relay-Central Valley (Class D State and Class D State Meet records)
- Boys 4 x 400 Relay-West Holt (Class C State and Class C State Meet records)
- Girls 4 x 400 Relay-West Holt (Class C State and Class C State Meet records)

- Boys Discus-Noah Rau, Chase County (All Class State, All Class State Meet, Class B State and Class B State Meet records)
- Boys Shot Put-Barrett Wilke, Stanton (Class C State and Class C State Meet records)
- Boys High Jump–Isaac Cronin, Valentine (Class C State Meet record)

*** Creighton won the Class D Boys State Golf Championship. Loomis finished as the Class D Runner-up. Calvin Wilmes of Creighton won the Class D Boys State Golf individual championship.**



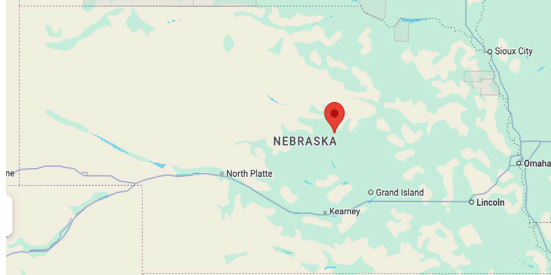
CREIGHTON BOYS GOLF TEAM

*** The Omaha World-Herald (OWH) and Lincoln Journal-Star (LJS) recently announced their All-State Teams for girls and boys soccer. Athletes from NRCSA-member districts who received 1st Team All-State recognition were:**

- BOYS ALL CLASS ALL-STATE: Obed Benazo, Schuyler (OWH, LJS)
- BOYS CLASS B: Obed Benazo, Schuyler (OWH, LJS), David Arciga, Schuyler (OWH, LJS), Edyn Cruz-Lima, Lexington (OWH, LJS), Gasper Juarez, Schuyler (LJS)
- GIRLS CLASS B: Lupe Sanchez, Northwest (OWH, LJS), Evie Keller, Northwest (LJS)

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Ord Public Schools



Mascots: Chanticleers

Enrollment: 570

Location(s): Ord, NE

Interesting Fact: Ord's Chanticleer mascot is the only high school mascot of its kind. We only share with Coastal Carolina University (and who has ever heard of a turquoise rooster!?!).

We recently were featured in a nationwide high school mascot challenge and made it to the Final Four challenge. This was pretty impressive considering it was based solely on votes and The Chanticleers were up against mascots from across the United States. In one of the challenges, Ord Chanticleers received over 325,00 votes. It was a neat way to help put Ord on the map!



Superintendent: Dr. Heather Nebesniak

Principals: Doug Smith, Elementary
Aaron Snyder Jr/Sr High

Board of Education: (L to R) Jake Sikyta, Dan Beran, Jay Knapp, Dawn Skibinski, Heidi Proskocil, Tom Thompson



This spring, Ord High School was selected as the site for the University of Nebraska Husker Spring Volleyball Match. It was a very exciting time for our community! We were the smallest school that they had selected for their on-the-road spring game and it was an honor to roll out the red carpet for the Huskers! The match sold out in 27 minutes and we packed the gym on May 3rd with over 1600 fans for this event. The town was painted red as there were local events throughout the downtown, the area Young Farmers Association provided tractor shuttle rides from the fairgrounds to help with parking, and we hosted a coaching clinic along with the event so our Junior High volleyball athletes got to participate. It was a true community event and it wouldn't have happened if our community hadn't supported the bond initiative in 2010 so that we were able to update and expand our facility. Go Chants! Go Big Red!



Chanticleer Gym all decked out for the Huskers!



Dr. Nebesniak with the UNL Husker Volleyball Team



Rebekah Allick on the ChantVision Screen!

Programs:

A recent success that we have had is with our FCS/FCCLA program. In the 2021-22 school year, we added a Family and Consumer Science Teacher to our staff. The position had been vacant for about 10 years and there was an increasing interest in having FCS classes back in both the Junior and Senior High schedule. Our first year of the program, we had eleven students qualify for the National FCCLA Conference and have been going strong since. By adding back in this program, we have witnessed an increased engagement with our students and have also contributed to our community by hosting a wide variety of community events. Rachel Hornickel is the FCS Teacher and FCCLA sponsor.



The Ord FFA is a program that has been a foundation of our District for a long time. One unique detail about our FFA program is that we have a FFA Farm. We enter into an annual lease for land that is adjacent to the local ethanol plant. Seed is donated and students work on the planting and then irrigation throughout the summer. Local farmers help with the harvesting and teach our students about the latest technology that farmers and ranchers use. After the harvest is sold, the Ord FFA receives a check for a portion of the profit. It is a great experience for our students to see the complete business cycle from planting to harvesting to planning for the next year. Dave Ference is the Head FFA Sponsor and Chrisinda Ritz is the Assistant FFA Sponsor. Recently Mr. Ference was a finalist for the Nebraska Golden Owl award.



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!*



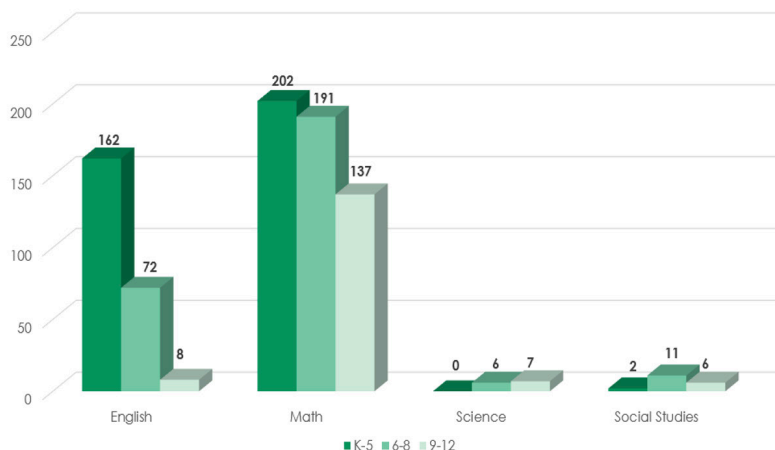
Nebraska SMART Free Online Tutoring for K-12 Students

.Spring 2025 Semester Impact

Tutoring has concluded for the Spring 2025 Semester. Throughout the Spring 2025 Semester, over **810 tutoring sessions** were conducted, providing more than **450 hours of tutoring** to K-12 students across rural Nebraska. This represents an increase over the Fall 2024 Semester, which recorded 735 sessions and over 405 hours of tutoring.

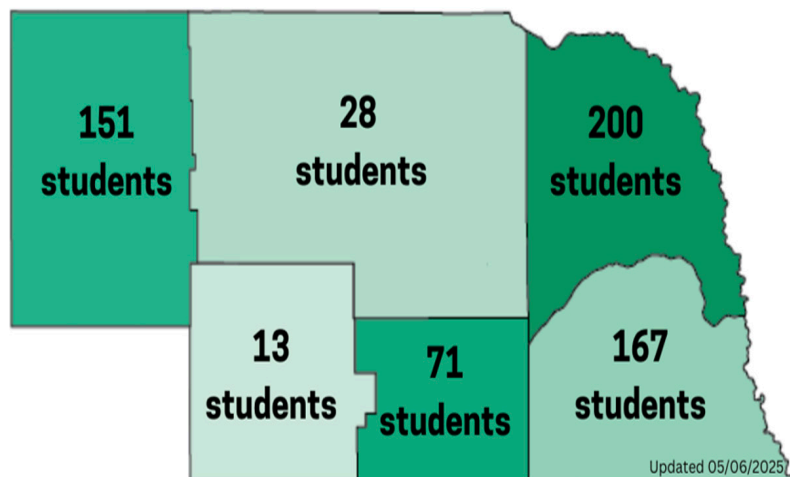
Of the sessions completed during the Spring 2025 Semester, **75% were for students attending an NRCSA member school district.**

The graph below illustrates the number of tutoring sessions completed by subject and grade level during the Spring 2025 Semester.



Tutoring will resume in August. Stay tuned for updates throughout the summer about Nebraska SMART.

Currently, **630 students have registered** since February 2024, with **74% attending an NRCSA member school district**. The map below shows the NRCSA districts where each student is registered.



Parent Feedback

Parents have shared their experiences about the impact the tutoring program:

Testimonial 1:

"My son scored 49 points higher on his NSCAS test for the spring. He's started working with [a Tutor] right around Christmas time! He was so proud of that growth and so am I!!!"

Testimonial 2:

"My daughter's comprehension at school has improved a lot and also her math scores went up!"

Testimonial 3:

"His tutor has such patience as he works through word decoding and reading. His tutor is very good at motivating him and keeping him engaged."

Testimonial 4:

"Being able to have one-on-one teaching and tutoring. My son was able to actually understand the information that he could not learn at school. He was able to master and actually understand the concept when working for 15 minutes 1-on-1 with [the Tutor]."

Testimonial 5:

"Repetition is key. Reassurance and patience, kindness and camaraderie. NSCAS Math score went up!! My student said, 'because of my tutor.'"

Testimonial 6:

"[The Tutor] was able to connect with [my son] and keep [my son] engaged while helping him to catch up in math. He was able to introduce new skills and go back and work with [my son] on not only his current homework but skills he was behind on. [My son's] grades and confidence have gone up in all subjects at school since he began this tutoring program."

How can school districts help?

New promotional posters will be mailed to each school district this summer for use in the upcoming school year. To request additional materials, such as bookmarks, please complete the Nebraska SMART [Promotional Material Request Form](#).

Your help in reaching out to parents within your district is essential to increasing awareness of this program. Here are a few ways you can assist:

Share about Nebraska SMART

- In school/district/classroom parent newsletters
- During Parent/Teacher Conferences
- With Teachers, Counselors, Parent/Teacher Associations, and district staff
- Link [Nebraska SMART](#) as a student resource on school district websites
- Distribute bookmarks to each K-12 student in school/district
- Connect with Nebraska SMART on social media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [X \(Twitter\)](#)
- Share with district technology team the domain [allowlist guide](#)

For more information, visit:

www.nscs.edu/nebraskasmart

Email for inquiries or to request promotional supplies: nebraskasmart@nscs.edu

Thank you for your support in raising awareness of Nebraska SMART!

Julie Dickerson; Nebraska SMART Director, nebraskasmart@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](#)

Southern Superintendent Chris Proski has shared a sample Superintendent Checklist that he uses. 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](#)

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 on-boarding 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 National 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 College & Career Success Team is led by Dr. Dawn Lindsley (dawn.lindsley@unl.edu) at the State 4-H Office and Jacie Milius (jacie.milius@unl.edu) in Gage County. In 4-H, we believe in the power of young people. With nearly six million members nationwide and 140,000 in Nebraska, we empower youth to lead for a lifetime. In a rapidly changing world, it's crucial for young people to be equipped with the right mix of knowledge, skills, and experiences for their transition from education to the workforce. Through our programming, we provide developmentally appropriate, experiential learning opportunities to help youth and adults explore postsecondary education and career options, preparing them to reach their fullest potential in today's dynamic job market. If you would like to learn more, please visit <https://4h.unl.edu/programs-priorities-career-college-success>.

Nebraska students are the leaders, innovators, and problem-solvers of tomorrow. Through collaboration with business & industry, organizational, and postsecondary partners, school districts can provide students with invaluable real-world experiences, access to resources, and insights into the demands of the workforce. We can bridge the gap between education and employment, equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and connections they need to thrive in the competitive global economy. Together, we can create a brighter future for our students and our communities.

The National Rural Education Association, in partnership with the Rural Schools Collaborative, has issued a study entitled WHY RURAL MATTERS. The report “looks critically at how educational supports and resources for student well-being are being distributed, casting light on which of our rural children are in need of additional support”. The study is well done and shows Nebraska in a pretty positive light. I would encourage you to take a look at WHY RURAL MATTERS, which can be accessed here:

[Why Rural Matters](#)

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](#)

NRCSA is pleased to announce 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.

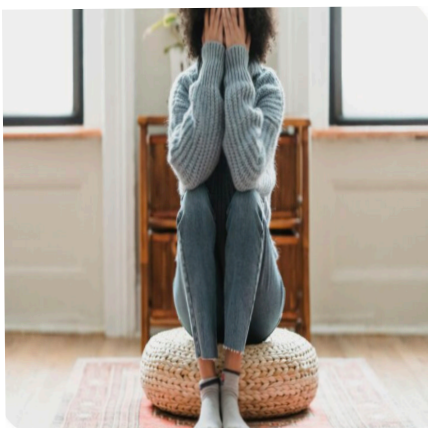
NRCSA recently hosted three introductory Zoom meetings with Mark Goldman and Deb Romano of New Leaf to have them explain what the program would look like. Below you can access the slide show from those meetings, as well as a recording of one of the meetings.

[New Leaf PowerPoint Presentation](#)

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



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.



[Read the Full Blog](#)

The American Heart Association is committed to partnering with schools in rural Nebraska to improve the health of their communities. A few of these opportunities include:

Tobacco Free Schools. Unfortunately, recent data reveals the ongoing challenges of youth tobacco use. The 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey showed that: Approximately 2 million MS/HS students reported using e-cigarettes during the pandemic; nearly 85% of them used flavored tobacco products. More than 4 in 10 HS students and nearly 2 in 10 MS students who used e-cigarettes did so 2 out of 3 days and youth showed a strong brand preference.

Many schools have struggled to keep up with the continued innovation of the tobacco industry. To help address that, the American Heart Association created our Tobacco Free Schools Toolkit. The toolkit is designed to help schools update their policies so that now – and in the future – they will cover all products, people, and places while providing mechanisms that support students who are battling tobacco addiction. More information/resources are [here](#).

Improving Cardiac Response in Schools. Did you know that the odds of surviving a cardiac arrest in rural areas is only about half of that in an urban area? In the aftermath of a cardiac emergency - minutes matter. The Chain of Survival starts with those who are present and requires everyone to do their part. The American Heart Association is committed to building a Nation of Lifesavers to and to helping school districts and other entities develop [Cardiac Emergency Response Plans](#). These plans consider: access to functioning AED's, a strong base of CPR knowledge and training, as well as the identification of a response team and the annual practice of a cardiac emergency. Tim Nikolai, Sr. Rural Health Director at the American Heart Association can help. Please reach out to: Tim.Nikolai@heart.org.

[Learn CPR in 60 Seconds](#)

A note from Mr. Nikolai:

*For those I have not met previously, I am the **American Heart Association's** lead for rural health in the Midwest Region, inclusive of your states. My role allows me to work collaboratively with all manner of organizations that are in a position to impact health in their communities – and schools are certainly near the top of that list.*

*There are many ways our organization has worked to collaborate with schools – supporting access to nutritious, affordable food, helping to address the ongoing challenges of vaping/tobacco use, and more. Today, though I'm focusing primarily on our resources to assist with cardiac readiness / cardiac emergency response planning. Much of the country was watching – or has followed since – the **collapse of Buffalo Bills' safety, Damar Hamlin, on Monday Night Football**. Fortunately, Damar's story had a happy ending. Our goal is to maximize the opportunity for everyone to have a similar outcome should they experience a Sudden Cardiac Arrest. Most organizations will not have the resources that the NFL does to ensure player safety, but there is much that can be done, especially with proper planning.*

*Some data suggests that **nearly 1% of schools will be the site for an out of hospital cardiac arrest annually**. For a variety of reasons, rural areas are disproportionately impacted by both rates of cardiac arrest and poor outcomes. We know that prepared and equipped schools mean better outcomes for staff, students, visitors, and the communities that so often gather in school spaces.*

We have recently built out/updated a variety of tools to assist schools – and other organizations – with their cardiac readiness. These include:

- *Sample Cardiac Emergency Response Guidelines and Plans.*
- *A toolkit to maximize the impact of AED placement and implementation.*
- *Training and awareness tools to help with Hands-Only CPR knowledge for staff and students.*
- *A revamped, training site search feature, for coaches, nurses, and others who need CPR certification.*
- *In some cases, we may have – or be able to help secure – financial resources to help schools with purchasing/maintaining AEDs, CPR mannequins, etc. Hearing the scope of that need can help us secure additional*

resources, so please let us know!

Please let me know if you see an opportunity or need to dialogue about these resources further or share them with your member districts. I'm happy to assist with newsletter copy, join or host webinars, or other ideas that fit your standard means of communication.

Finally, at the risk of sharing too much – a few other notes I wanted to highlight.

- *I've attached an invitation for our **Fall Educator Series**. Administrators/Educators from all districts are welcome to attend the sessions they are interested in. You'll see the one in November is on Cardiac Emergency Response Planning.*
- *Last year some 1300+ rural schools in the Midwest participated in our Kids Heart Challenge program. They raised life-saving money for our mission, earned PE equipment for their schools, and helped improve health knowledge in their community. Last year, tens of thousands of families learned Hands-Only CPR through the program.*
- *Thanks to the **Missouri Rural Health Association** for sharing our HeartCorps program on their home page. That opportunity exists for IA, KS, KY, MN, MO, NE, OH, and WI. Happy to chat more!*

[American Heart Association Service Summary](#)



PROACTIVE
COACHING

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

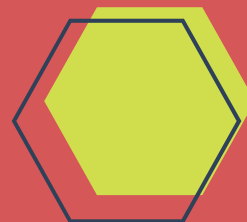


During the Game/Event

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's Legislative Committee (of which NRCSA is a member) continues to represent rural education on the Federal level. NRCSA Executive Director Jack Moles and NRCSA Legislative Committee Co-Chair Bryce Jorgenson (Supt. at Southern Valley) attended the NREA Federal Legislative Summit in Washington DC on April 6-8.



JACK MOLES AND BRYCE JORGENSEN AT THE U.S. CAPITOL



NRCSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JACK MOLES & SOUTHERN VALLEY SUPT. BRYCE JORGENSEN WITH NEBRASKA SENATOR DEB FISCHER (1999 NRCSA Outstanding Board of Education Member)

Bryce and Jack met with the offices of each of Nebraska's contingency in Congress. They specifically shared three points of emphasis with them:

- Maintaining funding promises via programs such as REAP, Title I, and e-Rate in light of the changes being made to the US Department of Education.
- Full funding of IDEA was stressed. This would bring about \$171 million more to Nebraska public schools in support of Special Education services.
- Passage of the Secure Rural Schools Reauthorization Act of 2023. This would bring almost \$200,000 to school districts surrounded by tax-exempt public lands.

NREAs Legislative Agenda for 2025 is as follows:

One in five students attends a rural school. Rural schools provide education critical to future productive citizenship for children and youth in rural communities. Rural schools and higher education institutions play important roles beyond teaching and learning as the economic and social hearts of the communities they serve. America can thrive when rural communities thrive, and rural communities cannot succeed without strong preK-12 and postsecondary learning opportunities. As the oldest (1907) education association representing rural educators, the National Rural Education Association (NREA) supports education opportunities for students from early childhood through postsecondary education to include federal support for early childhood education, K-12 education, and a wide range of postsecondary education opportunities.

1. **RURAL SCHOOL FUNDING** • NREA urges Congress to sustain and, where possible, increase funding to Title V, Part B of ESSA, the Rural Education Achievement Program, with a specific increase to the Rural Low-Income School program. • NREA supports investments in the Secure Rural Schools Programs (SRS) that provides critical funding for districts impacted by federal lands. NREA supports long-term dedicated SRS funding for 5-10 years and retroactive appropriations to ensure no disruption in funding. • NREA requests that Congress fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To honor the commitment to support the education of students with disabilities, Congress should act immediately to restore full funding to IDEA. • NREA opposes efforts to privatize or redirect federal funds to privatize education such as voucher programs, attempts to incentivize federal tax credits for donations to private schools, and proposals to create educational savings accounts for K-12 students.
2. **RURAL EDUCATION DATA AND RESEARCH** • NREA expresses strong support for continuation of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This will ensure collection and reporting of data about all schools including low-income and rural schools (including locale codes). NREA believes that accurate identification of rural schools is necessary to guide federal investments in rural schools and communities. • Data is essential to understand those practices that support rural students and advance rural education. • NREA supports continuing and increasing federal investment in data-driven rural education research.
3. **RURAL TEACHER EDUCATION AND**

WORKFORCE INVESTMENTS • NREA supports increased access and funding to career and technical education (CTE) programs in high school and post-secondary education to ensure a healthy rural workforce. • NREA supports the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the National Apprenticeship Act. WIOA increases the availability of services and supports in schools so students have access to youth apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. • NREA supports the preservation and expansion of federal grant and loan forgiveness programs that support the preparation of teachers and other school personnel, especially those that encourage individuals to work in rural districts and communities.

The Committee for Education Funding (CEF) is a group that the NREA Legislative Committee works with.

Sarah Abernathy, CEF's Executive Director, provided an update following in November's elections. She does provide a decent overview of what the national landscape might look like moving forward. (Please note that all of CEF's views do not necessarily reflect all of the views of NREA or NRCSA.)

FROM SARAH:

I. The election and CEF's mission to support investments in education

Dear CEF Members:

As we digest the results of yesterday's election and wait to find out which party will lead the House in the 119th Congress, I imagine many of you are focused on what this means for governing in general and for education funding and policy in particular. We will certainly be facing a more challenging environment for investing in education and for ensuring that the federal government supports and protects students, educators, and education institutions as the country continues to educate students of all ages. CEF's mission to increase the federal investment in education will not change, but we'll have to focus more on defense against funding cuts. We will continue to point out the results of education investments – for students immediately and for economic growth in the long term. We will need to communicate well, broaden our community of advocates, and target our efforts so they are as effective as possible.

Things to keep in mind – I generally hope for the best but try to prepare for the worst. I wasn't prepared for last night, but just made a list of some things I expect from a Trump Administration's education agenda, and

how likely they are to happen. Key things to keep in mind:

Congress did not enact past Trump budgets that cut education funding – In fact, Congress ignored the Trump Administration's requested steep cuts and increased education funding. I don't expect education funding increases now but do know that Members of Congress do not want to vote for bills that will cost jobs in their district or harm their constituents. One of our jobs will be to continue to highlight why investments in education are so important to those who need to be convinced.

It is hard to make big changes in government quickly – Some Republicans want to eliminate the Department of Education, while continuing many programs at lower funding but in either the Department of Labor or in Health and Human Services. This type of change is hard to enact. There do appear to be some executive actions that would eliminate civil servant positions, and it's easy to shrink a government agency by not hiring behind staff who leave. If Republicans keep control of the House next Congress, they could use the budget reconciliation process to fast-track passage of tax cuts and cuts to entitlements, since reconciliation bills need only a majority in the Senate, not the customary 60-vote margin to pass.

Administrative/regulatory agendas change with each Administration – Since recent presidents have not been able to enact much of their agendas because they often split power with Congress, each successive administration has made changes with executive action, which are then reversed by the next administration. A Trump administration is likely to reverse Biden Administration student loan debt relief executive actions and impose new ones that support their agenda, such as limiting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion requirements, limiting transgender student participation in sports or protections at the school level, and changes in interpretation of student civil rights protections.

Possible Republican policy agenda focused on the private sector (except for IHEs) – Conservative theory tends to support the private sector as a more efficient than the public sector for accomplishing goals, and I'd expect to see a renewed focus on support for private school vouchers that families could use toward private school education, more tax policy supporting private school tuition, and "local control" for public schools. At the higher education level, Republicans are likely to sharpen their attention to college admission

policies, protections for freedom of speech, policies regarding civil rights, and taxation of endowments. This can occur through appropriations and tax policy (forbidding federal funding if a recipient does a certain thing or requiring a certain action to receive federal funding), and through oversight hearings and federal administrative actions, among other actions.

What's next?

Changes in House and Senate party and committee leadership – We'll know more after all House races are called. The Washington Post has a handy list of the current Republican and Democratic seats most likely to change party, and ACG Advocacy is updating its own list of seats still to call, which I'll share. Meanwhile, I've attached a document that ACG prepared on Friday showing who is in line to head each Senate and House committee for each party depending upon who is in the majority, and who is in line for party leadership positions. Republicans plan to hold leadership elections next week, although the House could push its schedule back depending on what is known about all the remaining elections still to be called.

FY 2025 appropriations likely not finalized in December – The government is operating on an extension of fiscal year (FY) 2024 funding that expires on December 20. I think it is now likely that Congress will not finalize FY 2025 appropriations bills by then and will instead extend funding into next Spring (this is what House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) supported when the current 3-month extension was enacted in September), giving the new Republican Administration and Senate more say in the outcome. That outcome does not bode well for investments in education; the current bipartisan appropriations bill approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee includes \$12 billion more for the Department of Education programs than the Republican bill approved by the House Appropriations Committee.

Two 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](#)

UNL Tuition Discount & GOLD Grant

We have a new tuition discount program aimed at better serving folks from rural districts who are seeking school leadership degrees (MEd – principalship, EdD – superintendency)– or endorsements. The program provides a 15% tuition discount for educators who serve in NRCSA member districts or are in an area classified by NCES as rural or town. We think this is a small but important step toward helping rural schools be intentional about growing their own leaders. If interested, please contact Dr. Nick Pace at nick.pace@unl.edu

Big Red Leader Website

Big Red Leadership Flyer

Chadron State College Special Education Para-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.

The UNL Department of Educational Psychology has received a grant from the Swanson Foundation which allows them to offer mental health services to rural schools.

From Dr. Michael Scheel, Chair of the UNL Department of Educational Psychology:

The UNL Department of Educational Psychology would like to offer counseling and psychological services, as well as consultation services to the schools and communities of Southeast Nebraska. We run a mental health counseling and therapy clinic and we are offering counseling and consultation services to teachers, administrators, students, and community members of Southeast Nebraska. Services will be provided through remote and confidential means (i.e., Zoom conferencing). We are hoping that schools, families, and individuals contact us to schedule an

appointment for a telehealth counseling or consultation session.

We have recently learned that a donor will support our work with individuals living in rural Southeast NE by paying all fees for services. Thus, whoever seeks out our services will simply have to indicate they live in Southeast Nebraska, and any services we provide will be paid for through the UNL Foundation. Individual, couple, and family counseling will be provided without financial expense. Additionally, we can provide teachers, school administrators, school counselors, and school social workers consultation services for students of their schools without charge.

We are very excited to enter a partnership with schools and communities of SE Nebraska to promote mental health and well-being. We are aware of the mental health counseling disparities that exist in Nebraska rural areas, and our department, our College of Education and Human Sciences, and UNL are highly interested in offering our expertise and resources with the goal of enhancing the well-being of SE Nebraska individuals, schools, and communities. We are a group comprised of licensed psychologists and psychology graduate students who regularly provide services through our clinic to the Lincoln community. We are seeking to reach beyond Lincoln to connect more with surrounding rural areas. We also are acutely aware of the importance of addressing mental health concerns right now as we all are experiencing the stress of going through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Counseling and School Psychology Clinic is a training clinic in which graduate students in counseling and school psychology work with clients under the supervision of licensed psychologists. Services are available to all on a sliding scale. For clients from SE Nebraska communities, services will be paid for through UNL Foundation funds supplied by a donor who cares deeply about the welfare of schools and communities in SE Nebraska. Counseling services are offered to improve well-being, improve academic and behavioral issues, stabilize mood, manage stress, and improve life-adjustment issues.

For more information, please visit our clinic website:

<https://cehs.unl.edu/edpsych/clinic/>

A common theme from some of the decision makers on the state level is that “out of control” local spending is to blame for the property tax

problem. NRCSA, along with many other educational entities, maintains that we do not have a school spending issue, but instead have a school funding issue. Attached are two reports, one from NRCSA, the other from Open Sky, that discuss the myth of “out of control” school spending. It is my hope that administrators and Board of Education members will read, then use these reports to counter those claims. When you do please tell your district’s story as that is the most powerful way to get this message across.

[NRCSA Spending Study](#)

[A Look at School Spending in NE from Open Sky](#)

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.

Why Nebraska's Rural School Districts Choose D.A. Davidson for Public Finance:

At D.A. Davidson, we understand the heart of Nebraska, where strong communities are built around local schools, and every dollar must go further. As a trusted public finance partner, we don't just facilitate funding, we help shape futures.



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We are more than investment bankers. We are strategic allies for Nebraska's rural school districts, dedicated to delivering exceptional results through customized financial solutions. Whether your district is expanding a classroom wing or building an entirely new school, our team brings deep experience, insightful strategy, and unwavering commitment.

Our Public Finance division is a cornerstone of D.A. Davidson, with 54 investment bankers in 28 offices nationwide, including four right here in Nebraska. This local presence, paired with national reach, allows us to offer big-picture thinking with a homegrown understanding of your unique challenges and opportunities.

As the #1 underwriter for Nebraska K-12 Schools, by par and/or number of negotiated transactions since 2017 and consistently top ten nationwide, our ranking reflects what our clients already know: D.A. Davidson delivers.

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Since 2010, we've completed over 220 bond transactions

for more than 80 Nebraska Rural Community School Districts. These long-standing partnerships speak volumes:

- Alliance Public Schools | 11 transactions | \$25.9 million
- Centennial Public Schools | 9 transactions | \$33 million
- Fort Calhoun Community Schools | 11 transactions | \$40.8 million
- Hershey Public Schools | 11 transactions | \$24.3 million
- Minden Public Schools | 7 transactions | \$47 million
- Sidney Public Schools | 9 transactions | \$45.2 million

These aren't just numbers, they're gymnasiums built, classrooms renovated, and futures enhanced.

Big or Small, We're with You All the Way:

From a \$500,000 lease for building upgrades to a \$40 million bond for a new school facility, D.A. Davidson brings the same level of passion, precision, and partnership.

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Contact our Nebraska public finance team today.

Paul Grieger, Managing Director

402.392.7986 | pgrieger@dadco.com

Cody Wickham, Senior Vice President

402.392.7989 | cwickham@dadco.com

Andy Forney, Senior Vice President

402.392.7988 | aforney@dadco.com

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Purple Ribbon Partners



Apptegy

Emily Milnamow
2201 Brookwood Dr, Suite 115
Little Rock, AR 72202
Phone: (317) 219-8686
conferenceteam@apptegy.com



CORNHUSKER
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@cmbaarhitects.com



Facility Advocates

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



Purple Ribbon Partners



FARRIS ENGINEERING

Farris Engineering

Kate Breitenfeld
12700 W Dodge Road
Omaha, NE 68154
Phone: (402) 330-5900
kbreitenfeld@farris-usa.com



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MCL Construction

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



Network For Educator Effectiveness (NEE)

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

PIPER | SANDLER

Piper Sandler & Co

Scott Keene
2900 S 70th St, Suite 310
Lincoln, NE 68506
Phone: (402) 440-7734
scott.keene@psc.com



RMV Construction

Curtis Baetz
1515 E 11th St
Kearney, NE 68847
Phone: (308) 893-2010
curtis@rmvconst.com



TRANE

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TECHNOLOGIES

Trane Technologies

Jonathan Hoesch
11937 Portal Rd
La Vista, NE 68128
Phone: (402) 499-8468
jonathan.hoesch@trane.com



Roofing and Building Maintenance

Tremco Roofing

Tyler Petersen
3735 Green Road
Beachwood, OH 44122
Phone: (909) 302-0617
tpetersen@tremcoinc.com



Voss Lighting

Randy Herrick
4624 S 140th St
Omaha, NE 68137
Phone: (402) 850-9789
randy.herrick@vosslighting.com



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Wilkins Architecture, Design, Planning

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

Contact Information

NRCSA

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

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

Legislative Contacts

U.S. Senators

[Deb Fischer](#)

[Pete Ricketts](#)

U.S. House of Representatives

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[Adrian Smith](#)

Nebraska Governor

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[Dan Lonowski, Dist 33](#)

[Dan McKeon, Dist 41](#)

[Terrell McKinney, Dist 11](#)

[Glen Meyer, Dist 17](#)

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[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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