



# Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

*Member Update*

*January 8, 2026*



*Photo Credit: Elba Public Schools*



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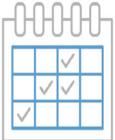


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# NRCSA Calendar



## NRCSA Events

### **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\*\*](#)

### **NRCSA Golf Tournament**

July 28, 2026

Meadowlark Hills Golf Course in Kearney

[\*\*More about this event\*\*](#)

## Committee Meetings

### **NRCSA Executive Committee**

9:30 AM January 20, 2026

Via Zoom

### **NRCSA Legislative Committee**

9:30 AM Thursdays during hearings

Via Zoom

### **NRCSA Scholarship & Recognition Committee**

February 26 & 27, 2026

NCSA Conference Room

At the NCSA Building in Lincoln

### **NRCSA Executive Committee**

3:00 PM March 18, 2026

Bronze 5 Room

At the Crowne Plaza 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



### Red Cloud Community Schools

Interim Search Complete



### Bancroft-Rosalie Community Schools

Application Process Complete

Finalists Selected: **Nov. 17, 2025**

Interviews: **Dec. 6, 2025**

Contract Starts: **July 1, 2026**



### Sandy Creek Public Schools

Application Process Complete

Finalists Selected: **Jan. 5, 2026**

Interviews: **Jan. 10, 2026**

Contract Starts: **July 1, 2026**



### Hampton Public Schools

Application Process Complete

Finalists Selected: **Nov. 21, 2025**

Interviews: **Dec. 6, 2025**

Contract Starts: **July 1, 2026**



### Hayes Center Public Schools

Search Complete



### Newman Grove Public Schools

#### Announcement of Vacancy

#### Apply for this Vacancy

Application Deadline: **Jan. 22, 2026**

Finalists Selected: **Jan. 28, 2026**

Interviews: **Feb. 4, 2026**

Contract Starts: **July 1, 2026**



### Potter-Dix Public Schools

Search Complete

Access the Members area of [www.nrcsa.net](http://www.nrcsa.net) anytime.

**Login: member   Password: learning**

## NRCSA Updates



**The Nebraska Unicameral started the 2026 session on Wednesday, Jan. 7.** A regular focus of the first ten days is always bill introductions, but there are other issues that will be discussed, such as the budget deficit and a possible personnel move within the roster of Senators.

NRCSA's Legislative Committee will begin weekly Zoom meetings on **Thursday, Jan. 15** to discuss bills that have been introduced and upcoming bill hearings. Once all bills have had their hearings, the Committee will begin meeting every other week for the remainder of the session.

A new feature for NRCSA members is that we are going to try and put out a short weekly update on what is going on legislatively. The plan is to put this out on Friday each week.

**From NRCSA Executive Director Jack Moles:** At the NRCSA Executive Committee's meeting on November 19, I informed the Committee of my intention to retire at the end of the current school year. While we don't know an exact end date, it will likely be sometime this coming summer. The Executive Committee will utilize the NRCSA Superintendent Search Service in conducting a search for my replacement. I would encourage anyone who has interest in the position to contact me and I will provide as much information about the position as possible.

I will write more at a later date, but I do want all to know that being the Executive Director of NRCSA has been one of the topmost highlights of my professional career. I truly loved being a teacher, a coach, a Principal, and a Superintendent, but I believe this has been my favorite role in education.

I plan to do all I can to assist the Executive Committee in the search, short of actually taking a role in choosing my replacement. That is the job of the NRCSA elected leadership and I will support them all that I can. I am already making plans on how to support the next NRCSA Executive Director.

The application period is now open and closes on Friday, January 16. Application information may be accessed at <https://www.nrcsa.net/member-services/superintendent-search>.

**The NRCSA Legislative Forum will be held on Thursday, February 26 at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln.** The Forum gives us a chance to hear first hand from Senators and others involved in the legislative process. Speakers will share insight during the morning session, followed by a luncheon.

## 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

During the luncheon we attempt to make it possible for you to have lunch with your Senator if he/she is able to join us. Information on registration can be accessed here:

**Register for the 2026 NRCSA Legislative Forum**

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**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.

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**There will be a few NRCSA leadership spots available for the 2026-27 school year.** We are currently taking nominations for the following positions:

**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.

**NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**—Current North Central District rep Dale Hafer is term-limited, thus the position will be open. The position has a term of three years, with the ability to run for a second term. This position is voted on by member entities in the North Central District.

**SCHOLARSHIP AND RECOGNITION COMMITTEE MEMBER:** The committee will possibly be moving from two year to three year terms. To make this work we would only add one new committee member for the coming year. The person can come from any of the NRCSA geographic districts.

Self-nominations for positions are accepted.

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**We need help in identifying student groups to help with the NRCSA Spring Conference. Each year we like to put a focus on groups from our member schools.** Needed are:

- A student instrumental music group
- A student vocal music group
- Two successful FFA programs to share on the successful programs their chapters have undertaken.
- Two successful student-led businesses to share on their learning experiences and community involvement in their businesses.

If you have a group you would like to have considered, please contact NRCSA Executive Director Jack Moles.

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The NRCSA Spring Conference is quickly approaching! The conference will be held at the Younes Conference Center North in Kearney on March 19 & 20. We are also offering a free pre-conference. Franklin-Covey has provided NRCSA with the opportunity to provide a very valuable experience, centered around the work of Steven Covey. The pre-conference will take place on Wednesday, March 18, 2025 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. A free lunch will also be provided.

#### **Register to attend the 2026 NRCSA Spring Conference**

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**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. 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 Spring semester were received and the three recipients have been selected. They are:

- Jacey Anderson, Thedford
- Maren DeJonge, HTRS
- Kylie Hiatt, Shelby-Rising City

Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association



SHELBY-RISING CITY ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL HEATHER THOMPSON, JACK MOLES, KYLIE HIATT, SHELBY-RISING CITY SUPERINTENDENT TUCKER TEJKL



THEDFORD PRINCIPAL ADAM KUNTZ, JACEY ANDERSON, JACK MOLES



HTRS SUPT GEORGE GRIFFIN, JACK MOLES, MAREN DEJONGE, HTRS PRINCIPAL KIM CANIGLIA

**Former Senator Lynne Walz was recently presented with NRCSA's Friend of Rural Education Award.** Sen. Walz had been unable to attend the NRCSA Spring Conference to receive her award, so NRCSA Executive Director Jack Moles travelled to Fremont to make the presentation. The Friend of Rural Education Award goes to individuals who are not NRCSA members who have made significant contributions to rural education in Nebraska or to NRCSA itself.



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**Application information for NRCSA Scholarships and nomination information for NRCSA Awards were sent out right after Thanksgiving.** One change to the Scholarships was approved by the NRCSA Executive Committee at its November 19th meeting. We are increasing the number of NRCSA scholarships for students entering the field of education when they go to college. We have been awarding 20 such scholarships for the past several years, but will now increase the number of scholarships to 23. These scholarships will remain at \$2,000 per recipient. We will still offer two Gary Fisher Fine Arts Scholarships in the amount of \$2,000. That means that NRCSA will be awarding a total of \$50,000 in scholarships to 25 students from NRCSA-member districts! Please help by making sure that students are aware of the scholarships. We did send notice of the scholarships to each member district's high school Counselor.

Each year NRCSA recognizes several individuals with our "Outstanding" Awards to a worthy Board of Education Member, Superintendent, Principal, Elementary Teacher, Secondary Teacher, Music Teacher, ESU Staff Member, and Classified Staff Member. You all have outstanding individuals in your schools—please consider nominating them for these awards.

Each year, one of the recipients of one of the Outstanding Teacher Awards (Elementary, Secondary, and Music) is chosen to be NRCSA's nominee for the National Rural Education Association's Rural Teacher of the Year Award. NRCSA's nominee for the 2025 award was Kari Schroder of Syracuse-Dunbar-Avoca. Kari was the runner-up for the NREA Award this year. She was awarded a teacher's bell by the NREA.



*KARI SCHROEDER (CENTER), WITH SYRACUSE ADMINISTRATION & NRCSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JACK MOLES*

**NRCSA held all of its committee meetings on Wednesday, Nov. 19 in conjunction with the NASB/NASA Education Conference in Omaha. Some of the outcomes from these committee meetings include:**

The Executive Committee:

- approved a move to add three additional \$2,000 NRCSA Scholarships which go to students from NRCSA-member schools. The students must be entering the field of education. This brings the number of \$2,000 scholarships that NRCSA provides to seniors from member schools to 25. Twenty-three of the scholarships go to students entering education, while two go to students who will major in fine arts.
- approved the adoption of an “event cancellation policy”. The policy lays out the procedures for late cancellations of those who are signed up for events. NRCSA must commit to meals prior to hosting events. The policy will address how refunds are made for cancellations.
- agreed to partner with the Holocaust Learning Experience. This group provides free teacher materials that can be used in meeting Rule 10 requirements in teaching the Holocaust and other genocides. More information will come out later.
- accepted an invitation from the University of Kansas Literacy Grant. Member schools that choose to participate will receive grants and participating teachers will receive stipends.

The Scholarship and Recognition Committee made a recommendation to make terms on the committee three years instead of two. This will serve to make terms the same as those on the Executive and Legislative Committees. The Executive Committee will vote to approve the move at its January meeting.

The Legislative Committee discussed several “rumored” legislative issues.

The Closing the Achievement Gap Committee is working on a plan which would ask for districts to apply for recognition of their intentional work in closing the achievement gap between students in poverty and students not in poverty. More information will come later.

## **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, and Potter-Dix Boards of Education identify their next Superintendent. We are currently assisting the Sandy Creek and Newman Grove Boards of Education with their search. We also assisted Red Cloud in a search for an Interim Superintendent.

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, Mike Cunning, Paul Sheffield, Mo Hanks, 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@nrcsa.net](mailto:jmoles@nrcsa.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**

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**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 143 such meetings. I most recently attended the Board meetings at Superior on Dec. 8, Riverside on Dec. 9, and Blue Hill on Dec. 15.

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

**MONDAY, JANUARY 12:** Brady and Eustis-Farnam

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.



RIVERSIDE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION

**The School Financing Review Commission, which was created last Spring by the Unicameral, has had four meetings thus far.** Information on the meetings can be found on the NDE website at <https://www.education.ne.gov/commissioner/school-financing-review-commission/>. The committee has presented its preliminary report to the Unicameral.

The Commission is made up of 18 individuals and is chaired by Commissioner of Education, Dr. Brian Maher. Senators on the Commission include Sen. Dave Murman, Sen. Jana Hughes, and Sen. Eliot Bostar, as well as former State Senators Lou Ann Linehan, Tom Briese, and Fred Meyer. Individuals from the Education world include Brady Superintendent Ann Foster, Pender Superintendent (and NRCSA Legislative Co-Chair) Jason Dolliver, Bennington Superintendent Aaron Plas, Millard Superintendent John Schwartz, Lincoln Associate Superintendent Liz Standish, Lakeview Board of Education President Keith Runge, Omaha Board of Education member Shavonna Holman, and Chancellor of the Nebraska State College System, Dr. Paul Turman.

**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>

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**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.

This campaign is available exclusively to NRCSA member districts. To learn more or reserve your spot, contact Anna Weber at [anna@a-plum.com](mailto:anna@a-plum.com) or visit [www.a-plum.com](http://www.a-plum.com).

### **Good Life EDU Podcast Featuring Anna Weber & Jane Davis**

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**Recently, Minden Superintendent Jim Widdifield contacted the NRCSA office to see if we could be in assistance in helping him conduct a survey concerning Early Childhood programs in our rural schools.** We assisted him with dissemination of the survey and he recently shared results.

From Jim: I have finally completed putting this together for those who filled out the survey. I received a good response from 87 schools. I appreciate all the schools that took the time to complete the survey. I did not include the specific schools in the results, but instead grouped them by size.

I share this information with you, not only because it has some very good information on Early Childhood programs, especially as it pertains to age groups, numbers of staff, and funding sources, but also to remind you that if you are wanting to research something please keep NRCSA in mind. Sometimes we already have compiled the information you are looking for. Also, if you want to do surveys, we can help you to disseminate the survey

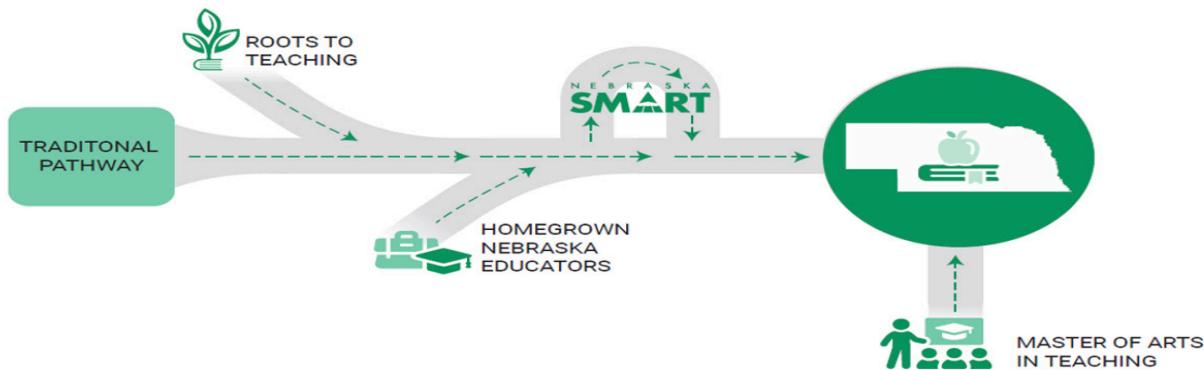
materials.

## Nebraska Pre-School Programs

I recently had a communique from a member Superintendent as to the history of Equalization Aid in his district. That is something we keep track of on an annual basis for all districts, so his request for help was very easily filled. Again, at NRCSA we may have already compiled information you might be wanting to find. All you need to do is ask!

## 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.

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**Chris Prokoski, formerly the Superintendent at Southern and now at Hastings, 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**

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**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](mailto: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](http://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\*\*](#)

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**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.

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**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\*\*](#)

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**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@nrcsa.net](mailto:jmoles@nrcsa.net)) or Jeff Bundy ([jbundy@nrcsa.net](mailto:jbundy@nrcsa.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\*\*](#)

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# 2026 NRCSA Legislative Forum

The 2026 NRCSA Legislative Forum will be held on Thursday, February 26, 2026, at the Cornhusker Marriott Hotel in Lincoln.

This year's program will feature remarks by many educational policy leaders.

There will again be the opportunity to discuss issues of local interest with senators over lunch. This provides an invaluable opportunity to network and discuss issues with your senator.

**Be sure and make plans to attend!!**

## Room Reservations

There are rooms available at the Cornhusker Hotel at a discounted rate of \$119.00 per night for Wednesday February 25, 2026. The Cornhusker is a Marriott Hotel; they have instructed customers to use the central reservation line or the link below to reserve a room.

\*Cornhusker Marriott Hotel: 1-866-706-7706

*\*The deadline to reserve from NRCSA's room block is **February 5, 2026**\**

## Program Highlights

Thursday February 26, 2026

**8:20 A.M.** - Welcome & Announcements

**8:30 A.M.** - Committee Chair or Rural Senator

**9:00 A.M.** - Committee Chair or Rural Senator

**9:30 A.M.** - Committee Chair or Rural Senator

**10:00 A.M.** - Committee Chair or Rural Senator

**10:30 A.M.** - Committee Chair or Rural Senator

**11:00 A.M.** - Committee Chair or Rural Senator

**11:30 A.M.** - Committee Chair or Rural Senator

**12:00 P.M.** - Lunch with Senators

**1:10 P.M.** - Jack Moles & Russ Westerhold; NRCSA Executive Director & Lobbyist

**1:45 P.M.** - Closing & Adjourn

*Please note: The schedule is subject to change.*

# 2026 NRCSA Spring Conference

The 2026 NRCSA Spring Conference will be held on March 18 to 20, 2026, at the Crowne Plaza and Younes North Convention Center in Kearney.

There will be many informative and timely sessions regarding law, TEEOSA, school finance, curriculum development, updates from the Department of Ed, staff and board development, updates regarding current federal and state legislation and others. Sessions highlighting special programs and initiatives are always a plus. A total of 35 sessions will be provided at the conference. As always, the general sessions will feature music groups, speakers on Thursday and Friday, scholarships, awards, recognitions, and the traditional meals that have become a mainstay of the conference.

As usual, there will be many opportunities for networking and informal discussions with attendees from other schools!

**Be sure and make plans to attend!!**

## Room Reservations

There are several hotels in and around the area. Attendees will need to make room arrangements for the conference.

These hotels participate in group rates for Spring Conference

Crowne Plaza (308) 238-7000  
Hampton Inn (308) 234-3400

These hotels do NOT participate in group rates

Holiday Inn (308) 237-5971  
Comfort Inn & Suites (308) 236-3400  
La Quinta Inn & Suites (308) 237-4400  
America Inn & Suites (308) 234-7800  
Fairfield Inn (308) 236-4200  
Holiday Inn Express (308) 234-8100  
Microtel Inn & Suites (308) 698-3003  
New Victorian Inn & Suites (308) 237-5858  
Wingate Inn (308) 237-4400

## Program Highlights

### Wednesday March 18, 2026

**10:00 AM** Pre-Conference: The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

**Presented by:**



**6:30 PM** Exhibitor Check-In and Set-Up

**7:00 PM** Early Registration and Hospitality Rooms Open

### Thursday March 19, 2026

**7:15 AM** Registration & Exhibit Hall Open

**8:00 AM** General Session

**11:00 AM – 11:50 AM** Select-a-Session I

**12:00 PM** General Session

**2:20 PM - 3:10 PM** Select-a-Session II

**3:35 PM - 4:25 PM** Select-a-Session III

**6:00 PM** Country Buffet

**7:00 PM** Hospitality Rooms Open

### Friday March 20, 2026

**7:30 AM** Registration Open

**8:00 AM- 8:50 AM** Select-a-Session IV

**9:00 AM – 9:50 AM** Select-a-Session V

**10:00 AM** Brunch

**10:50 AM** Closing Session

**12:50 PM** Gifts, Prizes, & Giveaways

# Shout Outs

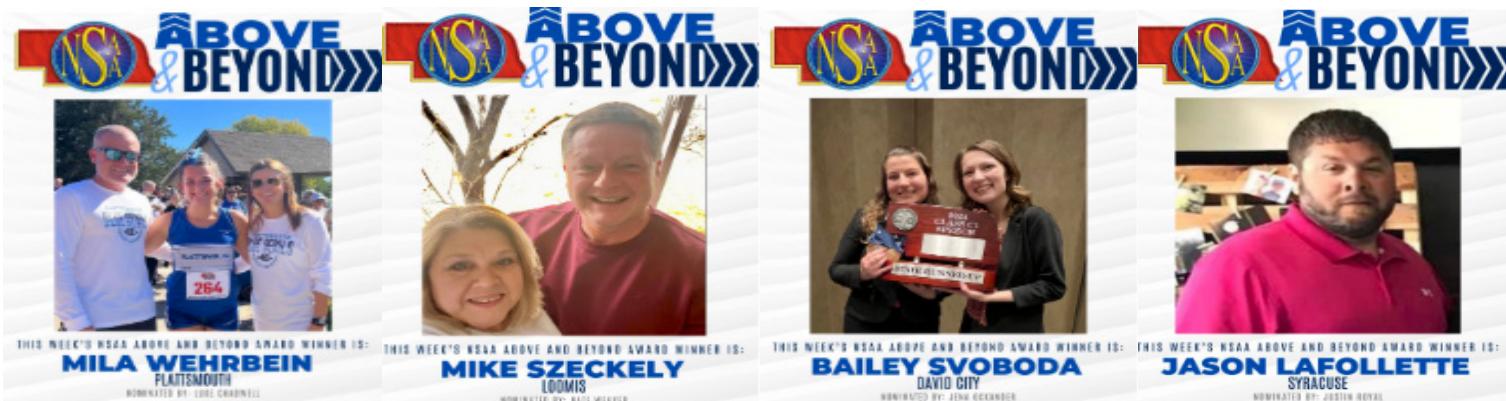


**NRCSA wishes to share in the celebration of the special accomplishments and recognitions going on in our member schools and ESUs.**

## January 2026:

\* 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 to date are:

- January 7: Mila Wehrbein of Plattsmouth.
- December 24: Mike Szeckely of Loomis.
- December 17: Bailey Svoboda of David City.
- December 10: Jason LaFollette of Syracuse.



\* NCSA recently hosted the State Principal's Conference in Lincoln. Those from NRCSA-member districts who received special recognitions included:

- This year's Nebraska Distinguished Principal is Josie Floyd, principal of Dudley Elementary in Gothenburg.
- The 2025-26 NSASSP Middle School Principal of the Year is Troy Mauch, who has served Alliance Middle School since 2015.
- Crofton High School's Johnnie Ostermeyer is announced as the 2026 NSASSP High School Principal of the Year.
- The Outstanding New Principal of the Year Award recipient was Kimberly Roberts, Principal at Central Elementary for Fairbury Public Schools.
- Dr. Julie Downing, Professional Learning Coordinator with ESU 13, is named the recipient of the 2025 Friend of NSASSP Award.

## Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

- The NSASSP Distinguished Service Award is presented to Patrick Moore, 7-12 principal at Blue Hill Community Schools.



Josie Floyd



Troy Mauch

Johnnie Ostermeyer



Kimberly Roberts



Dr. Julie Downing



Patrick Moore

**\* Several players from NRCSA-member schools received first team All-State honors in Volleyball from the Omaha World-Herald (OWH) and/or the Lincoln Journal-Star (LJS). Included were:**

- ALL CLASS ALL STATE: Shayla Rautenberg, Milford (OWH, LJS). She was also named the honorary captain for the All Class-All State Team by both the Omaha World-Herald and the Lincoln Journal-Star.
- CLASS C1: Shayla Rautenberg, Milford (OWH, LJS), Nora Herian, Pierce (OWH, LJS), Halle Dolliver, Malcolm (OWH, LJS), Payton Dolliver, Malcolm (OWH, LJS), Kamryn Behrns (OWH, LJS), David City (OWH, LJS), Kelsey Haynes, Louisville (LJS).
- CLASS C2: Briar Ray, Oakland-Craig (OWH, LJS), Rena Rasmussen, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge (OWH, LJS), Alicia Johansen, Freeman (OWH, LJS), Ashley Beethe, Johnson County Central (OWH), Carlie Kvols, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge (OWH), Addison Kastanek, Freeman (OWH, LJS), Mia Thomsen, Oakland-Craig (LJS)
- CLASS D1: Kyra Nelms, Southwest (OWH, LJS), Kaydence Haase, Exeter-Milligan/Friend (OWH, LJS), Erin Gegg, Shelton (OWH, LJS), Daisy Ryan, Overton (OWH, LJS), Libby Mitchell, Amherst (OWH, LJS), Kyla Elfgren, Overton (OWH), Breckyn Veskerna, Amherst (OWH), Kyla Griess, Sutton (LJS), Eden Peterson, Cross County (LJS)
- CLASS D2: Taryn Arbuthnot, S-E-M (OWH, LJS), Kenna Oligmueller, Wynot (OWH, LJS), Brooklyn Holtze, Cambridge (OWH, LJS), Emily Schack, Dundy County-Stratton (OWH, LJS), Clara Spargo, Dundy County-Stratton (OWH, LJS), Haley Wieseler, Wynot (OWH, LJS), Jaylin Geisen, Wynot (OWH, LJS)

**\* Alliance was the Class B State Runner-up in Unified Bowling.**

\* **Jack Tarr, retired Activities Director for Malcolm, will receive the National Federation of State High School Association's National Athletic Directors Citation Award.**

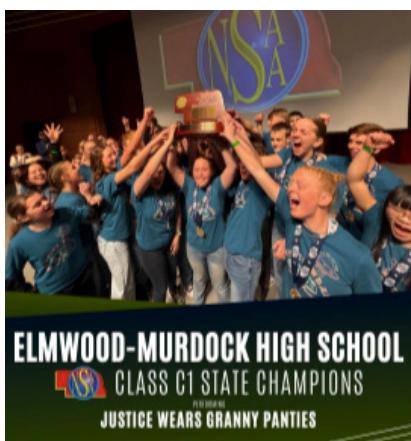


JACK TARR

\* **The NSAA honored Keri Hogue of Elmwood-Murdock as the 2025 as the Outstanding Theater Educator.**



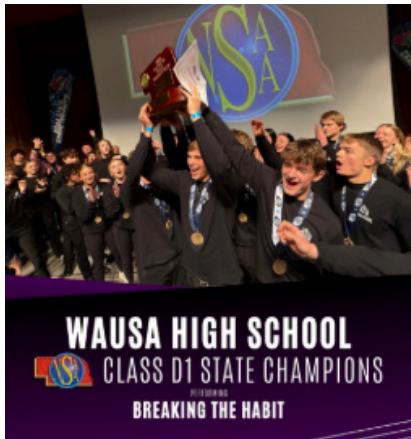
\* **Elmwood-Murdock was the Class C1 State Champion in Play Production.**



\* **Ravenna was the Class C2 State Runner-up in Play Production.**

\* **Louisville was the Class B State Runner-up in Play Production.**

\* **Wausa won the Class D1 State Play Production championship. This was Wausa's 17th State Championship in Play Production. Pawnee City was the runner-up.**



- \* **Arnold was the runner-up in Class D2 State Play Production.**
- \* **Several students and crews from NRCSA member schools won Outstanding Performer and Outstanding Technical Crew recognitions at the State Play Production competition. Include were:**
  - CLASS D2 OUTSTANDING PERFORMER: Rose Woeppel (Chambers)
  - CLASS D1 OUTSTANDING PERFORMERS: Braydon Hoesing (Wausa) and Tyler Tegtmeier (Pawnee City)
  - CLASS D1 OUTSTANDING TECHNICAL CREW: Sutherland
  - CLASS D1 OUTSTANDING TECHNICAL CREW MEMBERS: Payten Weber (Sutherland) and Hadlee Scott (Sutherland)
  - CLASS C2 OUTSTANDING PERFORMERS: Wyton Fiddelke (Ravenna) and Owen Standage (Ravenna)
  - CLASS C1 OUTSTANDING PERFORMER: Brooklyn Dowding (Elmwood-Murdock)
  - CLASS B OUTSTANDING PERFORMER: Dayton Carlson (Louisville)  
DAYTON CARLSON, LOUISVILLE
  - CLASS B OUTSTANDING TECHNICAL CREW: David City
  - CLASS B OUTSTANDING TECHNICAL CREW MEMBERS: Madeleine Summers (David City) and Rylee Thoendel (David City)



Rose Woeppel (Chambers)



DAYTON CARLSON, (Louisville)

**\* Many football players from NRCSA-member schools were recognized as First Team All State honorees by the Omaha World-Herald (OWH) and/or the Lincoln Journal-Star. Included were:**

- ALL CLASS: Keian Kaiser, Sidney (OWH)
- CLASS B: Tristan Campbell, McCook (LJS)
- CLASS C1: Wyatt Dent, Central City (OWH, LJS), Canon Allen, Aurora (OWH, LJS), Luke Wellman, Lakeview (OWH, LJS), Ben Monheiser, Sidney (OWH), Rhys Dorcey, Sidney (OWH), Nolan Asher, DC West (OWH, LJS), Grayson Vogt, Lakeview (OWH, LJS), Keian Kaiser, Sidney (OWH, LJS), Parker Osten, Lakeview (OWH, LJS), Logan Brewer, Fort Calhoun (OWH, LJS), Alek Doty, Sidney (OWH, LJS), Porter Mathews, O'Neill (OWH, LJS), Will Janssen, Syracuse (LJS), Garrett Schoen, Milford (LJS), Brandon DeAnda, Lakeview (LJS), Hunter Holle, Syracuse (LJS), Axel Jorgensen, Gothenburg (LJS), Grady Welke, O'Neill (LJS), Ryder Thiesen, Pierce (LJS), Jayce Hoffman, Chadron (LJS)
- CLASS C2: Jack Poppe, Doniphan-Trumbull (OWH, LJS), Colt Meyer, Ord (OWH, LJS), Brogan Benes, Boone Central (OWH, LJS), Kaleb Fenner, Yutan (OWH, LJS), Connor Heiderman, Battle Creek (OWH, LJS), Jordan Williams, Ord (OWH, LJS), Owen Sutter, Yutan (OWH, LJS), Rhodee Hill, Hershey (OWH, LJS), Madden Brabec, Wood River (OWH, LJS), Nolan Duzic, Malcolm (LJS)
- CLASS D1: Wes Biltoft, Sandy Creek (OWH, LJS), Brody Koehler, Johnson-Brock (OWH, LJS), Gatlin Davidson, Stanton (OWH, LJS), Hayven Stewart, Plainview (OWH, LJS), Christian Shaw, Sandy Creek (OWH, LJS), Kam Sealey, Sandy Creek (OWH, LJS), Tyson Jackson, Crofton (OWH, LJS), Gage Walton, Plainview (OWH, LJS), Kohen Lingenfelter, Plainview (OWH, LJS), Eli Fjell, Shelby-Rising City (OWH, LJS), Coy Vrbka, Shelby-Rising City (OWH, LJS), Alston Clark, Sandy Creek (OWH, LJS), Grant Jordan, Crofton (OWH), Ethan Latta, Dundy County-Stratton (OWH, LJS), Jeff Vrbka, Shelby-Rising City (OWH), Carson McDonald, McCool Junction (OWH), Brock Jeannoutot, Bloomfield (OWH, LJS), Brock Bailey, Dundy County-Stratton (LJS), Jacob Huxoll, Sutton (LJS), Owen Larsen, Pender (LJS), Preston Hoxhoven, Crofton (LJS), Preston Prochaska, East Butler (LJS)
- CLASS D2: Kotner Koch, Wynot (OWH, LJS), Briggs Ernst, Howells-Dodge (OWH, LJS), Tate Kvanvig, Mullen (OWH), Carson Sieber, Deshler (OWH, LJS), Hunter Luther, Howells-Dodge (OWH, LJS), Parker Schmidt, Wynot (OWH, LJS), Lane Heimes, Wynot (OWH, LJS), Dane Duryea, Anselmo-Merna (OWH, LJS), Wyatt Frey, Lawrence-Nelson (OWH, LJS), Maurice Robinson, Sandhills/Theford (OWH, LJS), Oran Grint, South Loup (OWH), Caden Swanson, Loomis (LJS), Nicholas Gonzalez (LJS), Jackson Williams, Lawrence, Nelson (LJS), Eli Luther, Overton (LJS), Dashiell Coleman, Elmwood-Murdock (LJS)
- CLASS D6 (as selected by the 6-Man Coaches Association: Jacob Barber, (Southwest), Cody Holmgren (Crawford), Kayde Ramm (Stuart), Houston Billeter (Southwest), Gage Ely (Red Cloud), Kaycen Hanna (Arthur County), Landon Duester (Silver Lake, Deric Kelley (Southwest), Atreyu Kling (Pawnee City, Owen Littau (Stuart), Drew Schmaderer (Stuart), Kaleb Miller (Leyton)

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## *Thayer Central Community Schools*



**Mascot:** Titans

**Enrollment:** 420 students

**Location(s):** Hebron, NE

**Interesting Fact:** Thayer Central is in Hebron, Nebraska. It also consists of Chester, Hubbell, Byron, Gilead, and Belvedere.

Fact: Chester, Nebraska, is known as the birthplace of 6-man football, invented in 1934 by Stephen Epler, a coach at Chester High School, as a way for small schools with limited players and finances to enjoy the sport during the Great Depression. The first game was played in Hebron, NE, and the game emphasized speed over size, quickly becoming popular in small communities.

Superintendent: **Eric Miller**

Principal(s): **Eric Hoops** – Elementary, **Bryan Solomon** – Secondary

Board of Education: President – **Rob Marsh**, Vice President – **Tysen Hissong**, Secretary – **Nate Casey, Jeremy Heitman, Karen Kroll, Thad Mumm**

**Programs:**

Special Education:

Thayer Central Community Schools would like to recognize our growing Special Education Department as it responds to the evolving needs of our students. Over the past three years, our special education population has grown by nearly 39 percent, a clear indication of both increased need and increased trust in the services we provide. In response, the district has expanded programming to include a Life Skills component, at each level, strengthening our ability to serve students with diverse learning and developmental needs. Most importantly, our students in this program continue to demonstrate measurable growth, increased independence, and meaningful success. This progress reflects the professionalism, dedication, and student-centered focus of our special education staff, whose work makes a lasting difference for students and families every day.

Vocal Music:

Mrs. Erin VanderSchaaf (pictured below), is in her 6th year at TCCS and has built an exceptional vocal music program that is visible across our school and community. From the elementary programs that sparks early enthusiasm for music, to meaningful 7–12 performances, Erin consistently creates authentic opportunities for students to grow and perform. Her students regularly represent the district with pride, through performing the national anthem at athletic events, selections to state-wide events, or community outreach at local nursing homes and churches. In the classroom, Erin exemplifies what it means to be a master teacher: she values every student, fosters inclusion through shared musical interests, and builds strong relationships rooted in respect. Erin's impact extends far beyond our music room, and Thayer Central is stronger because of her leadership, talent, and commitment to students.



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Wausa Public Schools



**Mascot:** Vikings

**Enrollment:** 210 students

**Location(s):** Wausa, NE

**Interesting Fact:** Strong Community Support for Student Opportunities:

Voters in the Wausa school district recently approved a \$2.15 million bond to upgrade and expand the school's sports facilities, demonstrating strong local commitment to enhancing opportunities for students both on and off the field. In 2020, Wausa Public Schools approved a 3 million dollar bond for upgrades to their school building, with an additional 1 million dollar donation for a new ITE/AG Building.

**Superintendent:** Brad Hoesing

**Principal:** Shane Anderson - High School Principal, Heather Heimes - Elementary Principal

Board of Education: **Mike Kumm, Katie Clausen, Amanda Nipp, Derek Cunningham, Brian Wakeley, Eric Wynia**



**Programs:**Exceptional Fine-Arts Tradition:

Corie Clausen is the dedicated K-12 band and choir director at Wausa Public Schools, where she leads both programs with passion and commitment, growing strong ensembles that bring music to life for dozens of students each year. Under her guidance, the Wausa High School marching band has earned top honors in its class at regional events, including winning its division at Wayne State College's annual Band Day, showcasing the band's precision, spirit, and musical excellence under her direction. Clausen's choir program is equally vibrant — with around 30 students in high school choir and about 25 in high school band — and her students regularly compete in regional and state contests, as well as having a strong showing in both All state honor choir and Class D All state Band and Jazz band. Mrs. Clausen is building strong vocal skills and musical confidence for her students while representing Wausa across the region. Wausa High School's One-Act Play program is a statewide powerhouse — under the directorship of Sheila Hoesing, the team has qualified for the state play production contest for 20 straight years, winning 17 state championships and one runner up in play production in that timespan, showcasing a long tradition of excellence in theater and the arts. Mrs. Hoesing's program is a showcase program for the Wausa school district, something that the community has long supported, and holds incredibly high expectations for.

ITE/SHOP/WHIP:

Wausa Public Schools has partnered with Builders of the Future and the Wausa Economic Development Corporation to build a house for the community of Wausa. Wausa's WHiP (Wausa High Internship Program) as well as the Skills USA and Builders of the Future has been instrumental in partnering with the economic development group in Wausa in providing students opportunities to learn about the trades while working in real world environments while giving back to our community through the building of houses in our 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

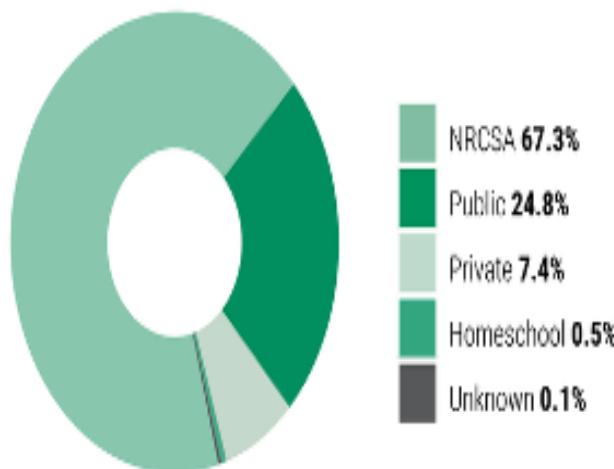
#### Free One-on-One Tutoring Now Available for All Nebraska Students

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 **2,171** tutoring sessions, serving **868** 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.

### 868 STUDENTS SERVED

Since February 2024, 868 students have registered for free online tutoring with Nebraska SMART. The chart shows the distribution of students registered based on school type.

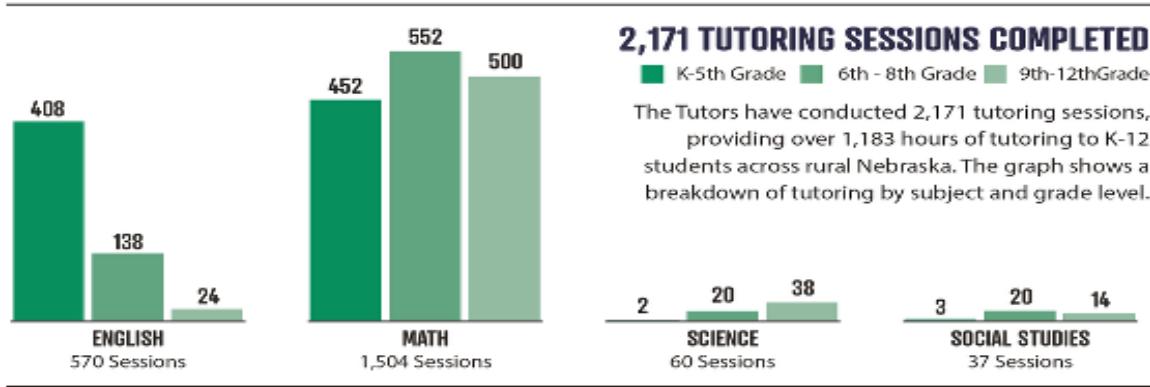


## How to Access Tutoring

To access tutoring, parents need to register their student(s) through our website. After registering, parents and students can log in to schedule tutoring appointments or request on-demand tutoring with a Tutor. Students are encouraged to provide the homework or assignment for which they need help. Assignments can be uploaded to the secure classroom, sent to the Tutor in advance via message, or a picture can be taken of the assignment when connected to the Tutor in the classroom.

For NRCSA schools, Nebraska SMART offers a meaningful way to extend learning beyond the classroom without adding extra cost or staff burden. Teachers and school leaders are encouraged to share this opportunity with students and families and to remind them that free, one-on-one tutoring is just a click away. Please help promote this free service to your students and families by sharing our [flyer](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)).

Together, the Nebraska State Colleges, the Nebraska Department of Education, and NRCSA schools are making a statewide impact, helping every student build confidence, master challenging subjects, and stay on the path to success.



Together, the Nebraska State Colleges, the Nebraska Department of Education, and NRCSA schools are making a statewide impact, helping every student build confidence, master challenging subjects, and stay on the path to success.

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

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**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**

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**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**

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#### **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**

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#### **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**

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#### **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](mailto:tmittelstet@unl.edu)) is serving as the CASNR Statewide Education and Career Pathways Coordinator and Bailey Feit ([bailey.feit@unl.edu](mailto: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.

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**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

## Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

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**

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**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**

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*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.*

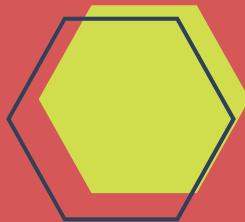
Book your School's  
Presentation

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*

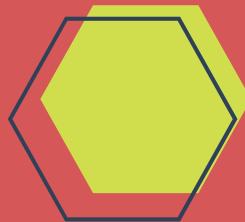


### Before the Season

What do Athletes/Kids Really  
Want?

Releasing Your Son/Daughter  
to the Experience

Parental Red Flags

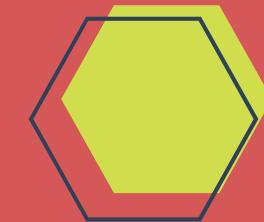


### During the Game/Event

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](mailto: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](http://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.

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**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](#)

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## 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](mailto:afette@csc.edu).

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## 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/>

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**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](#)**

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**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.



Since 1967, Farris Engineering has helped rural Nebraska school districts plan and phase facility improvements to maximize funding opportunities, stretch budgets, and support long-term success. Through comprehensive facility assessments, master planning, and thoughtful MEP design, we help schools set priorities, reduce operating costs, and create flexible learning spaces that adapt to student needs.

Phasing is key to the success of rural facilities. By breaking projects into manageable steps aligned with grants, bonds, and budgets, districts can address aging infrastructure without straining resources. Our recommendations optimize costs across the lifecycle to boost building performance, cut energy use, and improve comfort while staying on budget.

Efficient HVAC, lighting, and controls deliver major long-term savings. Simple, smart systems help districts reduce utility costs, improve reliability, enable technology-rich classrooms, and qualify for incentives. These strategies matter in rural areas, where staffing is limited, and systems must be robust and easy to operate.

Farris has served many NRCSA districts, including Gordon-Rushville, Hemingford, Mitchell, Chambers, Mullen, Meridian, Hershey, and Ponca, providing assessments, energy audits, HVAC upgrades, technology-ready infrastructure, and cost-effective renovations. Our focus: safe, comfortable, efficient spaces for students to thrive.

As a 100% employee-owned firm with offices in Sidney, Lincoln, and Omaha, NE; Council Bluffs, IA; Colorado Springs and Sterling, CO; and Kansas City, MO, we take great pride in supporting the rural schools that anchor our communities. We are honored to partner with NRCSA to help districts plan wisely, invest strategically, and build facilities that serve students for decades.

### **Project Spotlight: Hershey Public Schools Activity Center & Renovations Hershey, NE • 55,000 SF Renovated + 30,000 SF New Construction**

The Hershey Public Schools Activity Center and Renovation project shows how Farris Engineering modernizes rural districts by helping them update facilities with strategic phasing, MEP design, and budget-conscious planning. This multi-year Activity Center and Renovation project turned a 1959 building into adaptable, future-ready learning spaces while maximizing long-term value.

Farris renovated 55,000 square feet, creating modern K-12 spaces, updated high school classrooms, and dedicated areas for Title I, Speech, and Special Education. The former gymnasium was converted into a PreK-12 Media Center and Collaboration Space, serving as a key hub without the need to build new facilities.

Beyond refurbishing existing spaces, the district added 30,000 square feet—including a cafeteria, kitchen, Health Science area, multipurpose room, and new locker rooms. Farris' MEP and life-safety design improved ventilation, lighting, comfort, and reliability to support modern classrooms.

Safety was a key focus. Farris provided new fire alarm and suppression systems, enhanced building controls, infrastructure for a secure entrance, and upgraded intercoms. These updates ensure safety and easy maintenance—important for rural districts with limited staff.

This project shows how phased improvements, smart mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) planning, and community-driven investment help rural Nebraska schools expand capacity, improve instruction, and reduce operating costs. It also highlights Farris' collaborative approach: practical, energy-efficient, maintainable systems built to serve students for decades.

## Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

*Hershey Public Schools Activity Center & Renovations by Farris Engineering*





# Purple Ribbon Partners



## **Apptegy**

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## **Clark Enersen Partners**

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## **CMBA Architects**

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CORNHUSKER  
INTERNATIONAL  
TRUCKS

## **Cornhusker International Trucks**

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## **Facility Advocates**

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# Purple Ribbon Partners



FARRIS ENGINEERING

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## Tremco Roofing

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## MCL Construction

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## Voss Lighting

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## Wilkins Architecture, Design, Planning

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## Network For Educator Effectiveness (NEE)

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# Blue Ribbon Supporters



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# Contact Information

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**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**[Bob Andersen, Dist 49](#)[John Arch, Dist 14](#)[Christy Armendariz, Dist 18](#)[Beau Ballard, Dist 21](#)[Carolyn Bosn, Dist 25](#)[Eliot Bostar, Dist 29](#)[Tom Brandt, Dist 32](#)[Tom Brewer, Dist 43](#)[John Cavanaugh, Dist 9](#)[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 Holdcroft, 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](#)



## *NRCSA Programs*

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**Planning Support Service**

**Scholarship and Awards Programs**

**Superintendent Search Service**

**USBank OneCard Program**



*NRCSA Rural Community Schools Association*  
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[www.nrcsa.net](http://www.nrcsa.net)



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