



Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

Member Update

November 6, 2025



Photo Credit: Elkhorn Valley Schools



www.nrcsa.net



www.twitter.com/NRCSA1980



www.facebook.com/nrcsahome/



NRCSA Calendar

NRCSA Events

NRCSA Legislative Forum

February 26, 2026

Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln

[More about this event](#)

NRCSA Rural Teacher Committee

3:00 PM November 19, 2025

Room 206-207

At the CHI Center in Omaha

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 Closing the Achievement Gap Research Team

9:00 AM November 19, 2025

Room 206-207

At the CHI Center in Omaha

NRCSA Legislative Committee

10:00 AM November 19, 2025

Room 206-207

At the CHI Center in Omaha

NRCSA Scholarship & Recognition Committee

10:00 AM November 19, 2025

Room 208

At the CHI Center in Omaha

NRCSA Leaders Lunch

12:00 PM November 19, 2025

Room 208

At the CHI Center in Omaha

NRCSA Executive Committee

1:00 PM November 19, 2025

Room 206-207

At the CHI Center in Omaha



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

Application Process Complete

Finalists Selected: **Nov. 10, 2025**

Interviews: **Nov. 15, 2025**

Contract Starts: **July 1, 2026**



Bancroft-Rosalie Community Schools

Application Process Complete

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

Interviews: **Dec. 6, 2025**

Contract Starts: **July 1, 2026**



Hampton Public Schools

[Notice of Vacancy](#)

[Apply for this Vacancy](#)

Application Deadline: **Nov. 18, 2025**

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

Interviews: **Dec. 6, 2025**

Contract Starts: **July 1, 2026**



Hayes Center Public Schools

Search Complete



Potter-Dix Public Schools

Search Complete

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

Login: member Password: learning

NRCSA Updates

The National Rural Education's "National Forum to Advance Rural Education was held in Salt Lake City in mid-October. Nebraska had a very good contingency at the conference. Included were three members of the NRCSA Executive Committee: Chris Kuncel of Mullen (President), Ginger Meyer of Chadron (West District Representative), and Daryl Schunk of Randolph (Northeast District Representative), as well as NRCSA Executive Director, Jack Moles. Others from Nebraska who were in attendance were Mike Eldridge (East Butler Superintendent), Jen McNally (ESU 5), Ernie Valentine (ESU 7), Dr. Sarah Zuckerman (UNL), and Dr. Christopher Knoell (UNK).



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

NRCSA Leadership

Chris Kuncel, 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 Schunk, 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

to closely consider these services if you are in need of a Superintendent.

NRCSA is currently helping the Axtell, Hayes Center, Potter-Dix, Hampton, and Bancroft-Rosalie Boards of Education with their searches.

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

Our annual membership drive is close to being complete. Last year we had 224 school districts, ESU's, and State colleges and we hope to continue our annual growth. As of this writing, we are still waiting on a few members to renew. They have indicated that they are doing so, though. We also have a few non-members who are considering joining. Thanks to you for being a member. This energizes our representation and advocacy for rural Nebraska, no matter who we are engaged with on education, legislation, or community issues. Without your support, there is less rural advocacy. Whether we like it or not, the outstate and rural population does not create a legislative majority anymore. In fact, rural Nebraska lost another seat in the Unicameral in the most recent redistricting. Finding success, whether that be by passing, amending, or stopping legislation, comes from membership, relationships, and focus. Thanks to your membership in NRCSA, rural is "at the table" and making a difference on behalf of our rural students, schools, and communities.

The School Financing Review Commission, which was created this Spring by the Unicameral, has had two 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 next meeting is set for Tuesday, November 18, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Nebraska Department of Education.. This is a public meeting, which can be attended by anyone. All meeting materials that are shared during the meeting will also be uploaded after the gathering for those who are interested in reviewing them.

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 Briesse, 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>

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 or visit www.a-plum.com.

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

Team NRCSA did an outstanding job of representing NRCSA in the Market to Market Relay on Saturday, October 11. Leading the team were Michael Eldridge (Superintendent at East Butler), Megan Kozisek (Board President at East Butler), and Dawn Lewis (Superintendent at Arlington). The team finished third in the Mixed Masters Division.



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.

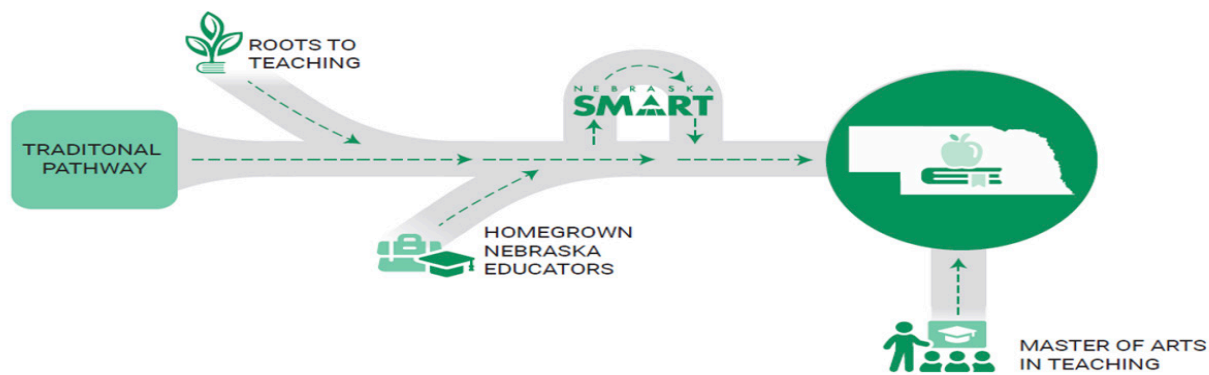
From Jim: I have finally completed putting this together for those who filled out the survey. I received a good response from 87 schools. I appreciate all the schools that took the time to complete the survey. I did not include the specific schools in the results, but instead grouped them by size.

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!

Educator Preparation Pathways



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

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

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

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

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

Lastly, the **Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT)** is a distinct, graduate-level program designed for individuals who hold a bachelor’s degree in a core content area and seek teacher certification in Nebraska. Delivered fully online, the 18-credit core of the program ensures that individuals fully meet certification requirements and

provides a flexible path to licensure, while the additional 18 credits of the graduate program provide options to complete the required content courses to qualify for teaching dual credit courses or work toward specific endorsement requirements. Individuals can choose to complete the core course which lead to certification without committing to the MAT; however, the completion of the MAT graduate program assists individuals in completing elective coursework that moves them toward their career goals. Unlike the Homegrown Nebraska Educators apprenticeship model, which supports paraprofessionals pursuing a bachelor's degree, the MAT serves adult career changers and professionals seeking a direct, advanced entry into the teaching profession.

Together, these initiatives form a comprehensive ecosystem of entry points into the teaching profession. From high school dual credit options and rural tutoring roles to full apprenticeship models and flexible graduate pathways, the Nebraska State Colleges are creating scalable solutions to address Nebraska's critical teacher shortage, ensuring every community has access to well-prepared, locally rooted educators for years to come.

Chris Prososki, formerly the Superintendent at Southern 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](#)

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

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

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

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

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

Dear friends,

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

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

- 1. A one-page guide to TEEOSA, the K-12 public school funding formula. With significant changes promised to the formula in pursuit of property tax relief, we felt it was important to share the current state of play.*
- 2. A guide on the budget process, including a timeline, who is involved, and a breakdown of important components of the state budget. With a significant deficit heading into session, lawmakers will grapple with complex decisions regarding spending. At OpenSky, we are ready to work towards a budget that reflects the priorities of Nebraskans and allows everyone a shot at The Good Life, and we look forward to partnering with you in this work.*

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

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

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

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

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

Onward,
Rebecca

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

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

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

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

[New Leaf PowerPoint Presentation](#)

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



[New Leaf Flyer](#)

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

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

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

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

Each year there is a central theme for the Academic Decathlon curriculum. For the 2025-26 school year, the theme is “The Roaring 20’s”. Music, art, and literature will cover the Jazz Age.

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

Ardis Moody ardis.moody@gmail.com

Cris Hay-Merchant chaymerchant@bellevue.edu



JOHNSON COUNTY CENTRAL ACADEMIC DECATHLON TEAM



AMHERST ACADEMIC DECATHLON TEAM

The NRCSA Executive Committee has made a positive move to assist non-traditional educators move toward full teaching certification. As a result of this move, new scholarship opportunities were created for paras who are in a “para to teacher program” and for transitional educators. NRCSA will provide three \$1,000 scholarships for the fall semester and three \$1,000 scholarships for the spring semester for the 2024-25 school year. Applicants for the scholarships must be current employees of a NRCSA-member district or ESU. Applicants must be enrolled for that semester in one of two types of programs: (1) in a recognized “para to teacher” program such as is offered by the three State Colleges (Chadron State, Peru State, or Wayne State), or (2) a transition to teaching program in which a person with a minimum of a bachelor’s degree who is employed to teach in a member school while working through a transitional program, such as offered by the University of Nebraska-Kearney. The applicant could currently be teaching under a transitional certificate. Application materials for Spring scholarships were distributed to member Superintendents and ESU Administrators, who were then asked to share with potential candidates in their buildings. The NRCSA Scholarship and Recognitions Committee selected the three Spring semester scholarship winners.

Applications for the 2026 Spring semester scholarships will be sent to Superintendents this week, with a deadline of **November 21**. Please share the application materials with staff members who may qualify.

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

NRCSA School Programs

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

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

U.S. Bank Commercial Card Program

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 137 such meetings. I most recently attended the Board meeting at Central City on October 20..

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

Monday, November 10: Creighton

Tuesday, November 11: Doniphan-Trumbull

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.



CENTRAL CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION



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

November 2025:

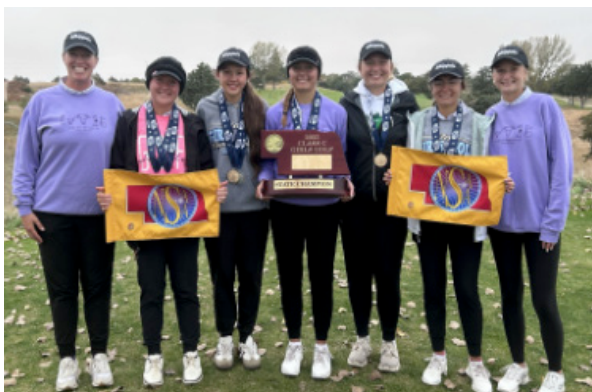
*** Julia Messere, of Aurora, was the Class B Girls State Golf Individual Champion.**



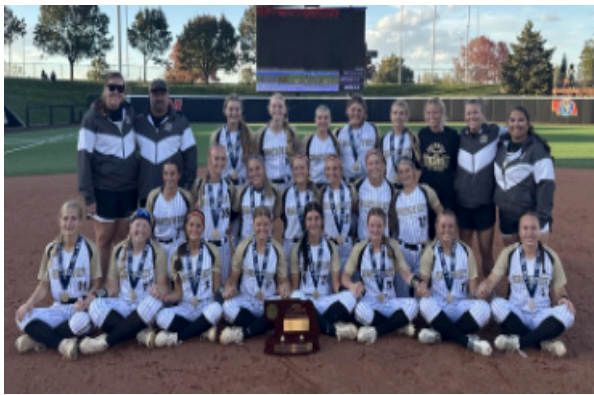
*** KayLynn Jorgensen, of Minden, was the Class C Girls State Golf Individual Champion. Her sister, Macy, was the runner-up.**



*** Minden won the Class C Girls State Golf Championship.**

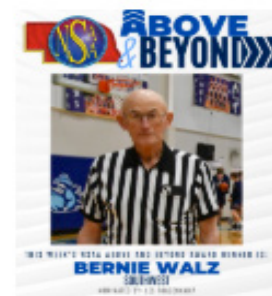
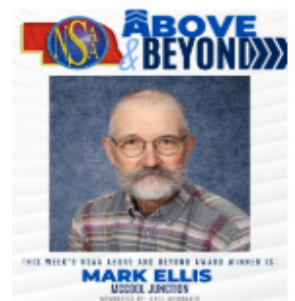


*** Northwest won the Class B State Girls Softball Championship.**



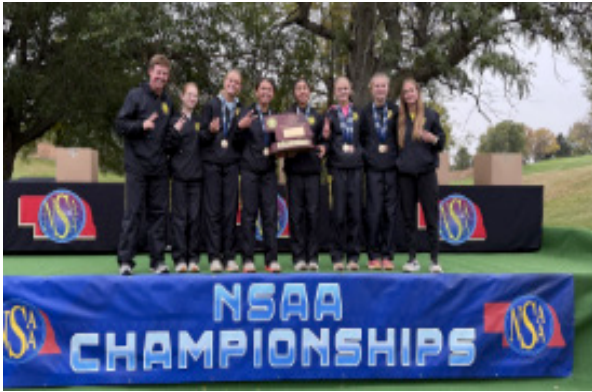
*** The NSAA's Above and Beyond program is designed to recognize and celebrate the outstanding individuals who make a meaningful impact within their communities. Whether it's a student, coach, community member, or parent, this award honors those who go the extra mile to support and uplift others. The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

- November 5: Dennis "Rudy" Riemersma of Red Cloud
- October 29: Natasha Haup of Leyton
- October 22: Larry Eilers of Boyd County
- October 15: Steve Heimes of Wynot
- October 8: Mark Ellis of McCool Junction
- September 24: Bernie Walz of Southwest
- September 17: Susan Tunnell of Minden
- August 20: Wendy Burgman of Creek Valley



*** The Nebraska School Activities Association recently announced the statewide recipient of the Believers and Achievers Award. Students from NRCSA-member districts include: Addison Andersen (Bertrand), Emma Baldeh (Dundy County Stratton), Tucker Biskup (Alma), Jack Canterbury (Blue Hill), Suhani Chaudhari (O'Neill), Shayleigh Coleman (Anselmo-Merna), Caden Culbertson (Lawrence-Nelson), Bridget Donovan (Syracuse), Jaquelin Luna Duran (Neligh-Oakdale), Beau Eisenhauer (Bloomfield), Mayte Flores Garcia (Wakefield), Brooke Goudie (Elmwood-Murdock), Meila Gronemeyer (Tri County), Kennedy Hall (Laurel Concord Coleridge), Ava Hoffman (West Holt), Berkley Jacobitz (Adams Central), Josie Ley (Wayne), Jubilee Matkins (Sterling), Dawsen McCarter (Overton), Alden McKnight (Plattsmouth), Declan Miller (Superior), Josey Moore (Ravenna), Hayden Nelson (Sargent), Noel Onate (Sidney), Eliu Paopao (Chadron), Saige Rother (Johnson County Central), Drew Schmaderer (Stuart), Addyson Stutzman (Holdrege), Natalia Thoendel (David City), Jesus Montoya Urquidez (West Point-Beemer), Camryn Yilk (Cozad)**

*** McCool Junction won the Class C Girls Cross County State Championship. Crofton was the Runner-up.**



***The 2025 NSAA Class D Girls State Cross Country Champion is Avery Arens from Crofton! She set a new All Class 5K course record time at 17:28.92, breaking the previous All Class record by 28 seconds.**



*** Doniphan-Trumbull won the Class D Boys Cross Country State Championship. Tri County was the Runner-up.**



*** The 2025 NSAA Class D Boys State Cross Country Champion was Kaser Johnson from Doniphan-Trumbull.**



- * **The 2025 NSAA Class C Girls State Cross Country Champion is Scout Bell from Gothenburg!**



- * **The Chase County Longhorns are the 2025 NSAA Class C Girls State Cross Country Champions. Adams Central finished as the Runner-up.**



- * **Holdrege was the Class C Boys State Cross County Runner-up.**

- * **Beau Thomas, a junior at Auburn, has been named as a semifinalist in the Nebraska Student Film Competition, which is sponsored by GlowMedia.**

- * **Plattsmouth was the Class 2A Champion in the 2025 Nebraska State Bandmasters Marching Band Competition. Crofton was the Class 1A State Champion.**

- * **Evelyn Dickey, a student at Raymond Central, was selected for the High School Honors Performance Series. This is a world-wide program in which students submit auditions for different major venues throughout the world. Her auditions for both Carnegie Hall in New York City and the Royal Festival Hall in London, UK. She plans to participate in both.**

- * **Claire Woeppel, of the Chambers FFA Chapter, is the 2025-26 National FFA Central Region Vice President!**



*** Nebraska FFA students experienced great success at the FFA National Conference in Indianapolis. Students from NRCSA-member schools who achieved top 5 finishes include:**

- Mason Dutro, Toby Orvis, Parker Walahoski, and Paige Walahoski (Overton)--1st place team in Environment & Natural Resources
- Cora Hoffschneider (Centennial)--1st place in Agricultural Sales - Entrepreneurship
- Molly Weber and Saige Rother (Johnson County Central)--3rd place in Power, Structural and Technical Systems: Div 6
- Craig Anthony (Johnson-Brock)--2nd place in Power, Structural and Technical Systems: Div 1
- Katelyn Melvin (Johnson-Brock)--5th place in Social Science: Div 3
- Elizabeth Olson and Ansley Cadwallader (West Holt)--4th place in Power, Structural and Technical Systems: Div 4
- Carson Reiman (Gothenburg)--3rd place in Extemporaneous Public Speaking
- Parker Walahosk (Overton)--5th place in Environment & Natural Resources
- Bela Jedlicka, Abigail Reyna, Addison Vavricek, and Allison Vavricek (Schuyler)--5th place team in Livestock Evaluation
- Cora Hoffschneider (Centennial)--1st place in Agricultural Sales - Entrepreneurship

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Dorchester Public Schools



Superintendent: **Dr. Nick Mumm**

Principal(s): **JJ Wagner, PK-6**

Mascot: Longhorns

Enrollment: 226 students

Location(s): Dorchester, NE

Interesting Fact: Dorchester Public School is listed on several websites as a haunted place.

This excerpt is from the Dorchester Times (dorchestertimes.blogspot.com)

Dorchester School Boiler Room: We can confirm that the boiler room of the 1927 Dorchester School building is no longer haunted, if it ever was. The old school building was torn down in 2008 to make room for the current DPS campus. But when it existed, there were reports that in the late 1920s a child “locked himself in the boiler room and died.” According to the old stories, school janitors in the modern era sometimes heard yells coming from the boiler room during the night -- and “when they went down into the boiler room, they didn’t find anyone.” So convincing were the reports that the Lincoln Journal Star in 2006 wrote a story on the old boiler room. The story quotes former school secretary Joyce Karl and former custodians Ron Sehnert and Sharri Kasl, who said: “I never go down there in the mornings if I’m ever here by myself.” Another publication ranked the Dorchester boiler room the second-most haunted site in Nebraska.

Board of Education: *Left to Right*
**Carol Schnell, Shelly Lehr,
Matt Hansen, Matt Smith,
Matt Bolton, Steve Vyhnalek,
Dr. Nick Mumm**



Programs: FBLA & Student Council:

Dorchester Public Schools is proud to highlight a new event launched this fall — Feed the Farmers.

Hosted by our Student Council and FBLA members, along with their sponsors, as a way to give back to the local farming community. Students and sponsors visited the local co-op, where they served meals to every truck that came through. They also sent additional meals out to farmers working in the fields, expressing our gratitude for the hard work and dedication of our area's agricultural community.

At DPS, we understand that tax dollars can be challenging for everyone, and in our rural farming community, farmers often feel the greatest impact. Like all of our stakeholders, they play a vital role in supporting our schools and community. The Feed the Farmers event gave our students an opportunity to show appreciation and give back to those who give so much in return.

A special thank-you goes to our cafeteria staff, who prepared all of the food that allowed our students and sponsors to package and deliver 300 meals to local farmers.

We are proud of our strong and active Student Council and FBLA organizations, whose members continually look for meaningful ways to serve others and make a positive impact. Events like this demonstrate the close partnership between Dorchester Public Schools and our community, a relationship that continues to grow stronger each year.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Axtell Public Schools



Mascots: Wildcats

Location(s): Axtell, NE

Superintendent: **Rob Gregory**

Principals: **Craig Lorenz**, 6-12 Principal; **Jennifer DeBord**, Ore-K-5 Principal

Board of Education & Administration: (L to R) **Bette Dimon**, board member; **Jeff Halvorsen**, board Treasurer; **Linda Almquist**, board secretary; **Ty Fickenscher**, board vice president; **Matt Strolberg**, board member; **Kurt Behrhorst**, President; **Jennifer DeBord**, PreK-5 principal; **Craig Lorenz**, 6-12 Principal; **Rob Gregory**, Superintendent



Programs:

Over the past five years, Axtell FBLA has maintained an average membership of 25 dedicated students. Our chapter has been an active participant in the Nebraska FBLA State Leadership Conference each year, with two members earning the honor of qualifying for the National FBLA Conference. During this time, Axtell FBLA has demonstrated a strong commitment to community service, raising and donating \$13,127 to the March of Dimes Foundation through our annual Dime Wars competition. Additionally, through our Feed Nebraska ribbon activity, we have contributed \$651 to the Minden Food Pantry and donated more than 3,000 canned food items to the Wilcox and Axtell Food Pantries.



The Axtell Agriculture Education and FFA program was started in 2018 and has had an average of 41 members made up of 7th-12th grade students. Thanks to the tremendous support from our school and community our program has had many successes over the past eight years. We have had ten students earn their State FFA Degree and two students earn their American FFA Degree. Additionally we have had the opportunity to build a school greenhouse, and also work with local farmers to plant, grow, and harvest a corn test plot and soybean test plot each year. We take an average of 20 students to State FFA annually and travel to National FFA every other year. Additionally we have had the privilege of hosting two student teachers. Throughout the year students participate in many local contests as well as participate in community service activities, leadership conferences, and career exploration visits.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Mascot: Plainsman

Enrollment: 226 students

Location(s): Grant, NE

Interesting Fact: Duke coach, Mike Krzyzewski visited Perkins County Schools to recruit and later sign the great Bill Jackman. Bill would go on to finish his basketball career at the University of Nebraska.

Superintendent: Mark Jolliffe

Principal(s): Ausitn Reisig, Elementary;
Dalton Pettera, Jr. High/High School

Board of Education:

Chris Fryzek, President; **Tori Gengenbach**, VP; **Jayson Bishop**, Treasurer; **Holly Cornelius**, Secretary;
Cam Sis, Member; **Jason Noyes**, Member

Programs:

Perkins County FFA - Led by Seth Burge and Doug Babbitt have an award winning FFA program. Last year we had a National Runner-Up team in the business category of Marketing (Colton Kroeker, Cooper Kroeker, and Trevor Labor) coached by teacher, Julie Ferguson. Our program represents the majority of our student population. Together they raised funds and our construction classes built our animal lab, that is a 30x60 building providing for hands-on, real life experiences for our students.



Perkins County Cross Country and Track teams won State Championships last year. We have great numbers participate in activities and this year was our year to take advantage of multiple talents. Perkins County has a solid tradition of excellence in activities



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!*

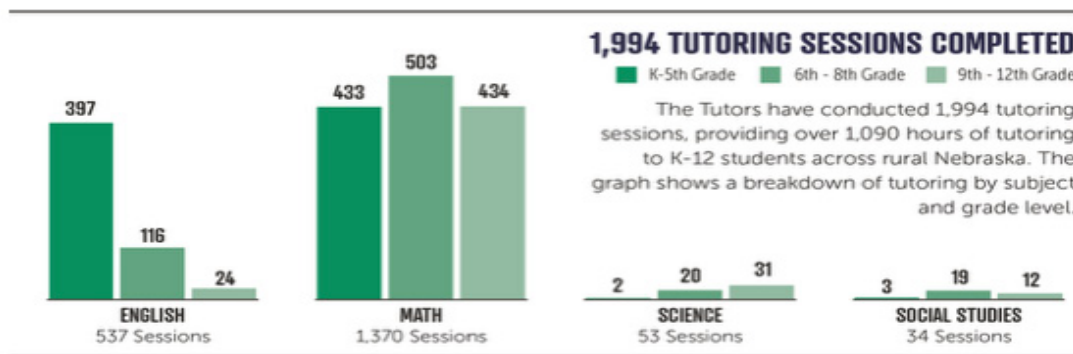


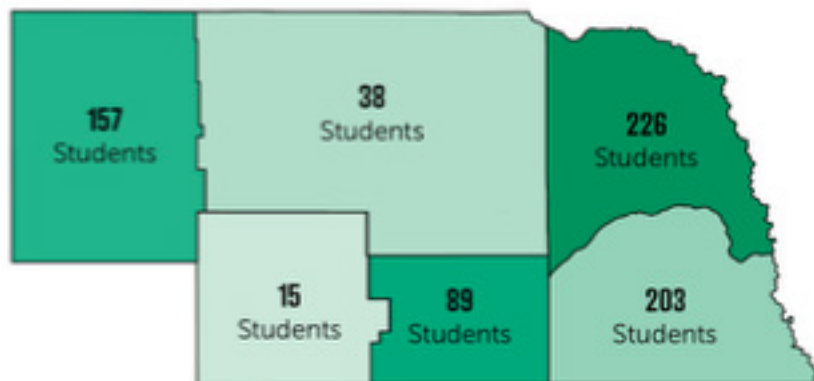
Nebraska SMART Update

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 **1,994** tutoring sessions, serving **728** 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.





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).

TUTORING HOURS  Monday - Thursday 3:30 to 8:30 PM CT	Tutoring sessions are available after school, in the evenings, and on weekends, giving students the flexibility to get help when it works best for them. Each session is customized to meet the student's needs, whether they're catching up, preparing for a test, or seeking to strengthen key skills. No Tutoring November 25-30 <i>Tutoring will not be available from Tuesday, Nov. 25 through Sunday, Nov. 30, due to the State Colleges' Fall Break.</i>
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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.nscs.edu/nebraskasmart or contact Judi Yorges at [jyorges@nscs.edu](mailto: jyorges@nscs.edu).

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

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

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

[Strengthening Rural Communities Through Public Education](#)

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

[State by State Fact Sheet](#)

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

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

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

[Board Member Onboarding](#)

From Rebecca Vogt, UNL

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

[Well Being of Rural Nebraskans](#)

From Jay Martin, NDE Director of School Safety & Security

Hello All,

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

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

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

Thanks for all you do in school safety.

[School Safety Newsletter Spring 2025](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since its inception, the Why Rural Matters series has sought to make publicly available data more accessible

and actionable. The overarching goal remains clear: to promote informed, civil dialogue about our shared civic responsibility to ensure that every student—rural or urban—has access to high-quality educational opportunities.

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

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

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

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

[Why Rural Matters 2025](#)

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

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

[Understanding REAP](#)



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

Book your School's
Presentation

Parent Meetings
or Special Events

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN EDUCATION-BASED ATHLETICS

PRESENTED BY DARIN BOYSEN, NCA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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



Before the Season

What do Athletes/Kids Really Want?

Releasing Your Son/Daughter to the Experience

Parental Red Flags

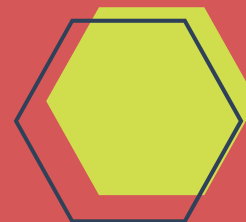


During the Game/Event

Modeling Appropriate Behavior

Big Picture

One Instructional Voice



After the Game/Event

Time & Space

Confidence Building

Relationship Building

Six Powerful Words

NEBRASKA COACHES ASSOCIATION

500 Charleston St, Ste 2, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

402-310-5472 | darin@ncacoach.org

Official Association Endorsements as of September 1





Nebraska School Administrators & School Board Members,

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

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

Presentation Details:

45-Minute Parent Presentation with One School or Combined Schools

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

Audio/Visual Requirements from the Host School:

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

Cost – Payable the Day of Presentation:

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

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

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

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

Darin Boysen

Darin Boysen
Nebraska Coaches Association

Official Association Endorsements – as of September 1



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

I. Policy Intelligence and Education News

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[NRCSA Principal Search Brochure](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Things for your consideration:

1) To qualify for this program participants must hold at least an Associate’s Degree or the equivalent in college credit hours. *(CSC will work with those applicants to provide them with the needed coursework leading up to program entry).*

2) Districts must agree to maintain para-professional employment throughout the course of the program—including during the student teaching experience.

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

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

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

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

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

We are very excited to enter a partnership with schools and communities of SE Nebraska to promote mental health and well-being. We are aware of the mental health counseling disparities that exist in Nebraska

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

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

For more information, please visit our clinic website:

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

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

[NRCSA Spending Study](#)

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

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

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



NEE Evaluation Supports Professional Growth at Ravenna

Since 2019, Ravenna Public Schools has partnered with the Network for Educator Effectiveness to transform educator evaluation into a process that supports a culture of continuous professional growth.

“NEE creates a common language between the teachers, administrators, and the board about what good instruction looks like,” Ravenna Superintendent Ken Schroeder said.

Used by 20 Nebraska districts, the NEE evaluation system includes training for administrators, an online platform, an integrated professional learning library, and ongoing support.

Training that Builds Leadership

A key feature of the NEE system is principal training and coaching. Principals learn strategies for conducting high-quality classroom observations and facilitating effective feedback conversations.

“With the NEE model, we’re able to give teachers better feedback. The teachers are way more engaged,” Elementary Principal Paul Anderson said. “We have a lot richer, deeper conversations.”

A User-Friendly Online Platform

Through NEE, districts also benefit from a user-friendly platform and data dashboards that help track growth and identify instructional priorities.

“We can see the indicators that we are performing well on in classroom observations,” Anderson said. For instance, Ravenna administrators noticed teachers had mastered student-teacher relationships and worked with teachers to identify new focus areas. “Just this year, we’ve added cognitive engagement and motivational engagement, and we’ll be able to see how that data plays out.”

The visualizations are also helpful for sharing data with board members.

“The tool puts historical data in a graphical representation that’s easy to latch onto,” Schroeder said. “We don’t have to spend time assembling the data and putting it in a graph for board members to easily understand.”

Ongoing Support Throughout Implementation

Ongoing support from NEE keeps the process collaborative, allowing schools to learn from one another and share effective practices.

“From the moment we said yes, any time we’ve had a question or a problem or an idea, they are right there,” Schroeder said. For example, NEE assisted the district in obtaining NDE approval and aligning indicators with the Marzano instructional model. “I think the indicators align so well with Marzano,” Schroeder said.

Cost-Effective for Schools of All Sizes

NEE services are packaged and provided to schools at one cost based on student count, making the evaluation system affordable for schools of all sizes.

Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

“One thing I still can’t get over is the value. NEE is incredibly cost-effective for everything you get with the complete package – the training, the rubrics, the EdHub professional learning library. It’s just an incredible value,” Schroeder said.

“Most importantly, it gets everyone – teachers, administrators, and board members – on the same page about what good instruction looks like. And the goal of it all is professional growth, making teachers better.”

If your school is ready for more meaningful and growth-oriented evaluation practices, contact NEE at 844-793-4357 or email nee@missouri.edu. Learn more at www.nceadvantage.com.



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