

## **Raymond Central Public Schools (District 0161) Board of Education Regular Meeting**

Wednesday, March 4, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Raymond Central Jr-Sr High School - Mustang Room

1800 West Agnew Road

Raymond, NE 68428-9783

**Present:** Mary Benes, Bernadette Brase, Larry Heyen, Bill Lange, Derek Matulka, **Absent:** Cathy Burklund. Also in attendance were: Bryon Hanson, Superintendent; Troy Lurz, High School Principal; Tony Kobza, Asst Principal/Activities Director; Abby Horbach, Asst Principal; Steve Rose, Valparaiso Elementary Principal; Deb Kruse, Ceresco Elementary Principal; and Amanda Coufal, SpEd Director.

### Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Vice President Heyen called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:30 PM and the Pledge of Allegiance was said.

### Nebraska Open Meetings Law

The audience was reminded that Open Meeting Laws would be followed.

### Motion to Excuse Board Member's Absence

Motion by Lange, second by Benes to excuse the absence of Cathy Burklund. RCV 5-0. Motion carried.

### District Mission Statement

*The Raymond Central community is committed to providing a positive, challenging learning environment which prepares each individual to be a responsible citizen in an ever-changing society.*

### Consent Agenda

Motion by Matulka, second by Lange to approve the consent agenda as presented including the regular meeting minutes of February 11, 2026; and updated Board Policies 4100-Qualifications for Appointment as Teacher and 4101-Qualifications for Appointment to Administrative and Supervisory Positions. Financial statement and monthly bills were unavailable due to the Board Meeting being a week early. RCV 5-0. Motion carried.

### Minutes of February 11, 2026 Meeting

## **Raymond Central Public Schools (District 0161) Board of Education Regular Meeting**

Wednesday, February 11, 2026 at 6:00 PM

Raymond Central Jr-Sr High School - Mustang Room

1800 West Agnew Road

Raymond, NE 68428-9783

**Present:** Mary Benes, Bernadette Brase, Cathy Burklund, Larry Heyen, Bill Lange, Derek Matulka. Also in attendance were: Bryon Hanson, Superintendent; Troy Lurz, High School Principal; Tony Kobza, Asst Principal/Activities Director; Abby Horbach, Asst Principal; Steve Rose, Elementary Principal at Valparaiso; and Deb Kruse, Elementary Principal at Ceresco.

### Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

President Burklund called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00 PM and the Pledge of Allegiance was said.

### Nebraska Open Meetings Law

The audience was reminded that Open Meeting Laws would be followed.

### Motion to Excuse Board Member's Absence

All members were present.

### District Mission Statement

*The Raymond Central community is committed to providing a positive, challenging learning environment which prepares each individual to be a responsible citizen in an ever-changing society.*

### Consent Agenda

Motion by Matulka, second by Heyen to approve the consent agenda as presented including the regular meeting minutes of January 14, 2026; workshop meeting minutes of January 21, 2026; January financial statement; monthly bills; resignations of Tasha Osten-Secondary Counselor, Amanda Smith-Speech Pathologist, and Monica Blank-Learning Coach; and approval of substitute teachers Garrett Dalton, Sydney Emanuel, and Kathryn Koehler. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

### Minutes of January 14, 2026 Meeting and January 21, 2026 Workshop

### Financial Statement/Report

### Monthly Bills

### Policy Review

### Certificated Staff Resignation(s)

### Substitute Teachers

### Correspondence/Recognition

Matt Smith was recognized as an Above and Beyond Award nominee last week.

### Principal Transition Report

Principal Troy Lurz and AD/AP Tony Kobza reviewed the transition process and planning that is being done for Tony Kobza to move into the Principal role next year.

## Enrollment Projections and Staffing Report

Superintendent Hanson reviewed enrollment projections and staffing for next year as well as the benefits of maintaining three classrooms per grade at the elementary level.

### Public Forum

#### Reports

#### Administrative Reports

##### **Submitted by Troy Lurz, Jr-Sr High School Principal** **Professional Development/Resource Adoption:**

Our next professional development day is scheduled for March 6, and will continue our focus on new learning. We are beginning to see instructional staff make stronger connections between classroom practice and the principles introduced during professional learning days. This induction work will remain a priority as we allocate time to review relevant research and provide guidance to help staff align new learning with their current instructional practices.

The Science Department continues to narrow its instructional resource options. Dedicated time will be provided for collaborative work as the team moves toward finalizing its selections.

##### **Walk Through Observations:**

We continue to spend significant time in classrooms in walk through observations with a focus on providing timely, high-quality feedback to educators. These walkthroughs are conducted with intentionality and planned frequency. They have become a routine part of the daily operations of the high school office. Dedicated time has been set aside to complete walkthroughs with minimal interruptions whenever possible.

To date, administration has observed, documented, and provided feedback nearly 250 times, averaging approximately 12 walkthroughs per week. This consistent presence creates meaningful opportunities for instructional conversations and allows administration to better support teachers in their classroom efforts.

##### **Friday Celebrations:**

Friday Celebrations proudly continue at the junior high/high school as we recognize our Raymond Central family members and their accomplishments. Recent celebrations have highlighted students, certified and classified staff, our school resource officer, and substitute staff. All nominations are submitted by fellow family members who wish to see individuals recognized.

In addition to individual recognitions, we continue to spotlight school activities and programs, upcoming showcases, and special events. As part of our ongoing effort to "Tell Our Story" we are intentional about celebrating the many successes across our school community. There is much to be proud of at Raymond Central. We will continue to share our goings-on on the school website, on Facebook, and social media so we can continue to control the narrative about our wonderful school.

##### **Counseling: Tasha and Celia**

- Mini College/Career/Military Fair date: March 11 - We would love to have local businesses come set up a booth for our career fairs. Please spread the word and have people contact [tasha.osten@rcentral.org](mailto:tasha.osten@rcentral.org).- Amazing feedback from reps that our kids and staff are attentive and purposeful when visiting booths!
- Scheduling and planning for next year has started
- Dual Credit Night is March 2 - open for 9-11th graders
- March 24 - ACT Day
- April 13 - NEST 529 parent information session at Valparaiso Elementary
- May 9 - Graduation

### **High School Student Council:**

The Raymond Central High School Student Council is proud to announce that they are organizing a community blood drive in partnership with the Nebraska Community Blood Bank. Because this blood drive supports the community blood bank, all donated blood stays right here in our local community, helping neighbors, friends, and families when they need it most.

The blood drive will take place on **Wednesday, April 1 from 9:30am-1:00pm**. with the Bloodmobile located in the RCHS parking lot. The Student Council invites all eligible community members to come out and support this important cause.

This year's drive ties into the "Green Flag" theme, symbolizing care, responsibility, and doing the right thing for others. Donating blood is truly a green flag moment; one simple action that can save lives and make a meaningful difference.

We appreciate the continued support of our school and community as our students lead by example and give back in a powerful way.

### **FBLA:**

Looking ahead, the next RC FBLA Craft Fair is scheduled for March 21. FBLA has launched a business clothing closet. Thank you for all of the donations we have already received.

This week is FBLA week. We have several activities planned for JH/HS students. We are also looking to spotlight FBLA Alumni, please fill out this form: <https://forms.gle/Le6x4BGjEXY6S251A>

### **Submitted by Tony Kobza, Asst Jr-Sr High School Principal/Athletic Director**

#### **Facilities**

We moved and updated the senior pictures screen as well as updated the valedictorian and salutatorian plaques. We will continue to add to the Academic Wall with the help of the Teacher Leadership Team.

We are working to design updated recognition for the banners in the gym as well as CTSO, Activities and Athletics historical recognition.

#### **Activities**

**FBLA** - Looking ahead, the next RC FBLA Craft Fair is scheduled for March 21, 2026.

FBLA is also launching a business clothes closet to provide members and RC students with professional clothing for competitions and the workforce. More details will be shared soon.

**One Act** - The Drama Program is gearing up for the Drama Showcase and the Spring Musical (to be announced), as well as our two planned show experiences coming up during the spring semester: *Hadestown* (based on Greek Mythology) and *Capital City* (based on Mari Sandoz's novel), both at the Lied Center. Beyond being a great deal of fun, experiences like this are invaluable to the students' learning because they can observe the "best of the best" in the performing arts and take inspiration for their own art, strengthening skills they use in and out of rehearsal.

**Quiz Bowl** - The school qualified a team to attend the National Academic Quiz Bowl Tournament in Chicago again this year. Students who will be attending are: Drew Tice, Sophia Burt, Deacon Christensen, and Marissa Tvrdy.

**Band:** We will have our second JH pep band on February 2nd for the girls JH basketball game. If this goes well, it is my plan to add one JH football and JH volleyball game next year, and possibly make this a tradition to do one junior pep band game per sport. HS will kick off their first basketball pep band on December 11th.

#### **Facilities/MTAF**

Created parking area on the well field that can be used for overflow parking attached to current and future parking areas.

MTAF is over \$1 million raised through donations, sponsorships, fundraising, grants and in-kind commitments. The driveway is paved and close to being usable. This will affect traffic flow in a positive way.

We are working on fundraising and grants that will help us continue to show progress. Driveway is a major step.

Next steps are:

- Site Drainage
- Fence and perimeter curb for playing surface
- Final Grading for field
- Rock and perimeter drain for sub base
- Turf Installation

**Submitted by Abby Horbach, Asst Jr-Sr High School Principal**

We are now a little over one month into the implementation of our revised Advisory/Intervention structure, and the response from both staff and students has been overwhelmingly positive. Advisory time has become a valuable space for students to develop and strengthen executive functioning skills, including regularly checking PowerSchool and grades, monitoring missing assignments, communicating with teachers, and following through on responsibilities. Staff are intentionally building relationships while also holding students accountable, creating a supportive and structured environment.

We are seeing consistent student progress each week, which has been especially important given the recent increase in student absences due to illness. Advisory has provided a critical layer of support to help students stay organized and connected despite missed instructional time.

Intervention continues to be effective as teachers use this dedicated time to re-teach essential standards and address specific learning gaps. These teachers report that this additional time allows for more targeted instruction, as they are able to focus on areas of need rather than moving forward with new content. This approach has been beneficial in supporting student understanding and reinforcing foundational skills. Overall, the Advisory and Intervention model is proving to be an impactful system that supports both academic growth and student accountability. We are excited by the progress being made in such a short amount of time and look forward to continuing to refine these structures to best meet student needs.

**Submitted by Elementary Principals Steve Rose and Deb Kruse**

**Interviews:**

We conducted interviews for Kindergarten through 2nd grade openings. The candidate pool was strong and we are confident that each person we interviewed would be an asset to our team. We are in the process of offering positions and will give updates on the process as candidates accept the positions.

**Winter Benchmark Testing:**

Below is an analysis of winter benchmark testing by grade level.

**Kindergarten-FastBridge Summary**

- Trend: Kindergarten is very close to meeting the EOY goal at midyear
- Strengths: Significant growth in phonological awareness and foundational decoding, Word Segmenting is a clear strength
- Instructional Implications: Continue strong phonics and PA instruction, Focus next on automaticity and transfer to reading connected text

**1st Grade-FastBridge Summary**

- Trend: Some growth, but students are well below the EOY benchmark at midyear.
- Strengths: Strong phonological awareness, Growth in decoding (nonsense words)
- Concerns: Fluency and sentence reading comprehension declined, Sight word growth is present but slow
- Instructional Implications: Increase focus on accuracy + automaticity in connected text, Explicit work on high-frequency words, Ensure decoding skills are transferring into sentence-level reading

**2nd Grade-FastBridge Summary**

- Trend: Growth is evident, but students remain below benchmark.
- Strengths: Major gains in accuracy, Solid improvement in overall reading skills
- Concerns: Automaticity lags behind accuracy, Fluency is likely impacting comprehension
- Instructional Implications: Shift emphasis from accuracy to rate, phrasing, and expression, Incorporate repeated reading and fluency routines, Monitor comprehension as text complexity increases

### **3rd Grade-FastBridge Summary**

- Trend: aReading shows growth and is meeting/exceeding the EOY goal, CBMR shows a significant decline, indicating concerns with fluency in connected text, Skill Breakdown
- Strengths: Strong and improving accuracy, Comprehension (aReading) is solid
- Concerns: Sharp drop in automaticity, Fluency is likely impacting stamina and comprehension during extended reading
- Instructional Implications: Shift focus to fluency practice (rate, phrasing, expression), Use repeated reading and modeled fluent reading, Monitor CBMR closely to ensure fluency improves alongside comprehension

### **4th Grade-FastBridge Summary**

- Trend: Growth in both comprehension and fluency, Students remain below EOY benchmarks, but are trending upward
- Strengths: Strong accuracy, Steady growth in comprehension
- Concerns: Automaticity remains below benchmark, Fluency gains are not yet sufficient to meet EOY goals
- Instructional Implications: Continue fluency routines with increasing text complexity, Emphasize rate and prosody, Ensure comprehension work is paired with fluency support

### **5th Grade-FastBridge Summary**

- Trend: Growth in fluency, Slight decline in aReading from BOY to MOY
- Strengths: Accuracy is not a concern, Improvement in automaticity
- Concerns: Drop in comprehension (aReading), Fluency gains may not yet be translating to understanding of complex texts
- Instructional Implications: Focus on comprehension strategies with grade-level complex text, Pair fluency practice with meaning-based discussion, Monitor aReading closely to ensure recovery by EOY

### **Grades 3-5 Cross-Grade Trends**

- Accuracy is strong across all grades
- Automaticity is the primary area of need, especially in grades 3 and 5
- Fluency gaps may be contributing to comprehension challenges as text complexity increases

**Submitted by Amanda Coufal, Director of Special Education**

#### **Unified Bowling Banquet:**

The Unified Bowling team celebrated the 2025-2026 season by bowling with family and friends at the Seward Bowling Alley. Everyone had a great time wrapping up the season while recognizing letter winners and award recipients. A special thank you to Peggy Breitreutz and Paige Mestl for presenting the awards!

**Indicator 13 Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Submitted:**

The CAP was submitted to NDE on January 30, 2026, with only two minor documentation errors related to inviting an outside agency and the four-year course plan. Both issues were corrected during the annual IEP meetings. Indicator 13 training will be provided to special education teachers to review expectations and required updates. I am very proud of the diligence our special education teachers have shown in managing their paperwork while adapting to ever-changing expectations.

#### **Collaboration with ESU:**

Our special education staff has been able to utilize the ESU2 Regional Literacy Coach and the Behavior Interventionist to support students with unique needs. Our ESU is an exceptional resource, and their team is always willing to collaborate, brainstorm, and observe students and teachers to provide meaningful guidance that helps strengthen student skills.

#### Student Board Member Report

#### Superintendent's Report

Superintendent Hanson gave an update on current Legislative Bills, mentoring, the Strategic Plan, and a potential building. He also reviewed Policy 4171-Resignation of Certificated Employees.

Teacher contracts will be sent out on February 17 and due back on March 17.

#### Classified Staff Hire(s)/Reassignment(s)/Resignation(s)

Peggy Breitzkreutz, Cheryl Rieck and Sophie Custer will be retiring at the end of the year. We also received a resignation from Jennifer Crees, Health Tech.

#### NASB Monthly Update

#### NRCSA Monthly Report

#### Update on Superintendent Goals

#### Safety Report

Lights are up at the end of the new drive.

#### Facilities Report

The Facilities & Transportation Committee met on Monday. Most of the items discussed are new business agenda items below.

#### Important Upcoming Dates

February 17 - Deadline to file as an Incumbent  
February 25 - Policy Committee Meeting at 3:30  
March 4 - Regular BOE Meeting at 5:30

#### Board Committee Reports

Curriculum & American Civics Committee (Burklund-chair, Lange, Matulka)

Facilities & Transportation Committee (Matulka-chair, Burklund, Lange)

Finance Committee (Burklund-chair, Heyen, Lange)

Negotiations Committee (Benes-chair, Heyen, Matulka)

Policy Committee (Benes-chair, Brase, Heyen)

## Old Business

### New Business

Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve the School Calendar for the 2026-2027 School Year.

Motion by Brase, second by Matulka to approve the 2026-2027 school calendar as presented. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

### Certificated Staff Hire(s)/Reassignment(s)

Motion by Matulka, second by Brase to approve the reassignment of Shae Roth from 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Teacher to Library Media Specialist; and new hires Lillian Gansebom-Kindergarten, Karlie Hanson-1<sup>st</sup> Grade, and Molly Barnett-2<sup>nd</sup> Grade. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

### Discuss, Consider and Approve 2026-2027 Classified and Support Staff Salaries as Presented

Motion by Matulka, second by Brase to approve 2026-2027 Classified and Support Staff Salaries as presented. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

### Discuss, Consider, and Approve 2026-2027 Administrator Salaries and Contracts as Presented

Motion by Brase, second by Matulka to approve 2026-2027 Administrator Salaries and Contracts as presented. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

### Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve Lawn Care Bid

Motion by Heyen, second by Matulka to approve the lawn care bid from 5T Lawn & Landscaping at a cost of \$6,365.00. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

### Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve Lawn Mowing Bid

Motion by Matulka, second by Heyen to approve the lawn mowing bid from 5T Lawn & Landscaping at a cost of \$115.00/mowing each at Ceresco and Valparaiso. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

### Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve the purchase of a Honda Mini-Van to Replace the Surplussed Ford Van.

Motion by Brase, second by Matulka to approve the purchase of a Honda Odyssey mini van at a cost of \$42,249.00 to replace the Ford van to be sold as surplus. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

Discuss, Consider, and Take Necessary Action to approve the purchase of replacement Chromebooks and laptops on our yearly computer rotation.

Motion by Matulka, second by Brase to approve the purchase of replacement Chromebooks and laptops on our yearly computer rotation from Pine Cove Consulting at a cost of \$67,573.48. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

### Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve the Bid for the Rock Parking Lots.

Motion by Heyen, second by Lange to approve the bid from Gana Trucking to rock the new parking lot to the south at a cost of \$129,261.62. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve the Lighting Project.

Motion by Brase, second by Matulka to approve the proposal from Kidwell to install driveway and parking lot lighting at a cost of \$135,230.00. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve the Stairs from the Lower to Upper Parking Lot.

Motion by Brase, second by Matulka to approve the proposal from Stephens and Smith Construction to install 8' wide stairs from the south parking lot to the new parking lot at a cost of \$29,210.00 and the proposal from Dale's Custom Welding and Fabrication to install handrailing to the stairs at a cost of \$7,930.29. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve The Lease Purchase for The More Than a Field Project.

Motion by Matulka, second by Heyen to approve the Lease Purchase for the More Than a Field Project for \$1,250,000.00 to start construction this spring. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

Next Regular Board Meeting

The next regular Board of Education Meeting will be held Wednesday, March 4, 2026 which is one week earlier due to three Board members not being available the 2<sup>nd</sup> week.

Adjournment

Motion by Brase, second by Heyen to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 PM. RCV 6-0. Motion carried.

Financial Statement/Report

Monthly Bills

Policy Review

**Qualifications for Appointment as Teacher**

To be eligible for appointment as a teacher, an applicant must have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree from an accredited or approved college or university and have a current teaching certificate, **license, or permit** from the State of Nebraska, Department of Education (or provide satisfactory evidence that these requirements will be in place prior to commencement of duties), and such other certification, license, or **permit** as may be required by law.

Legal Reference: Neb. Rev. Stat. § 79-801 et. seq.

Date of Adoption: April 20, 2009  
Reviewed with No Changes: October 11, 2023

**Qualifications for Appointment to Administrative and Supervisory Positions**

To be eligible for appointment to any administrative or supervisory position, an applicant must have a minimum of a Master's Degree from an accredited institution of higher learning with graduate training in educational supervision and administration from an accredited or approved college or university or have completed the coursework required for an **Alternative Pathway Permit**. Applicants must have a current Administrative and supervisory certificate or **permit** from the State of Nebraska, Department of Education (or provide satisfactory evidence that these requirements will be in place prior to commencement of duties), and such other certification or license as may be required by law.

Legal Reference: Neb. Rev. Stat. § 79-801 et. seq.

Date of Adoption: April 20, 2009

Reviewed with No Changes: October 11, 2023

## Correspondence/Recognition

FBLA award winners from the Midland Business Competition were: 1<sup>st</sup> Place-Raymond Liu-Intro to Info Tech; 2<sup>nd</sup> Place-Marissa Jensen-Business Communication; and 4<sup>th</sup> Place-Grace Schulte-Agribusiness.

Tony Kobza and our staff ran an incredible District Championship Basketball Event. Unfortunately the outcome wasn't what we had hoped for.

The Fine Arts students put on a wonderful Pops Concert on February 26.

## Staff Device and Computer Lab Purchasing Plan

**Student Chromebooks** will be updated at grades 6 and 10. Devices are slowing down due to AI features included in Chrome browser, etc. and we had to upgrade to 8GB of RAM. We are also looking at going with 11.6" (instead of 12.2") models due to availability and pricing.

**Lab Computers** are due to be updated. We have two computer labs with 24 computers each. It is yet to be determined if we buy  $\frac{1}{4}$  of needed computers which spreads out the cost but would require purchasing every 1-2 years or if we buy  $\frac{1}{2}$  of needed computers which would complete one lab at once and purchase every 3-4 years.

**Staff Computers** - we are giving staff the option of using a Windows Device (15" Lenovo) which we have been using for the past 5 years or a 15" Macbook Air. Macbooks would be easier to manage but some staff will need to stay on Windows for the type of software they run and our labs will stay Windows based. Macbooks are slightly more expensive so we will run Macs on a 5-6 year rotation while Lenovos will stay on a 4 year rotation.

# Tech Device Rotations

# Student Chromebooks

## Changing rotation

- Old rotation: Elementary class, 6th grade, 9th grade
  - Puts strain on devices of upper classmen
- New rotation: Elementary class, 6th grade, 10th grade
  - MS will have a chromebook for 4 years
  - Looked at getting a Chromebook + for 10th-12th grade, but was not cost effective

Devices are slowing down due to AI features included in Chrome browser, etc.

- Had to upgrade to 8GB of RAM (year 2 of this upgrade)

Had to go with 11.6" (instead of 12.2") models due to availability and pricing

# Lab computers

Looking at starting a rotation for our two computer labs. ~24 computers for each lab.

- Option 1: Buy  $\frac{1}{4}$  of needed computers
  - Spreads out cost
  - Computers should last 5-6 years, so 1-2 years between purchases
- Option 2: Buy  $\frac{1}{2}$  of needed computers
  - Entire lab would be redone at once
  - We would go 3-4 years between purchases

# Purchase Option 1

16 GB RAM

512 GB storage

\*These are same specs that we have now, just in a smaller unit.



## ThinkCentre M75q Gen 5 Tiny (AMD)

★★★★★ (161)

Est Value ⓘ \$1,199.00

**\$1,089.00** 9% off



Use eCoupon ⓘ LENOVOPOWER

eCoupon limited to 5 units only ⓘ

Add To Cart



Delivery FREE Standard Delivery: Get it by Tue, Feb 17

[Delivery options for 60654](#)



# Purchase Option 2

32 GB RAM

1 TB storage

Upgrades RAM memory for faster application (more necessary as AI is included in more apps/programs)



## ThinkCentre M75q Gen 5 Tiny (AMD)

★★★★☆ (161)

Est Value ⓘ \$1,459.00

**\$1,219.00** 16% off



Use eCoupon ⓘ **LENOVOPOWER**

eCoupon limited to 5 units only ⓘ

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# Staff Computers

Giving staff the option of using a Windows Device (15" Lenovo) which we have been using for the past 5 years or a 15" Macbook Air

- Macbooks will be easier for me to manage once we connect them to a Device Management software which Jaxn has been helping to set up
- Certain staff will still need to stay on Windows for the type of software they run and our labs will stay Windows based
- Macbooks are slightly more expensive (still waiting on final prices for Lenovos), so we will run Macs on a 5-6 year rotation while Lenovos will stay 4 year

## CTE Expansion Report

Career Technical Education (CTE) is undergoing significant growth, driven by a need for a more skilled workforce and increased student demand for hands-on learning.

The [AQuESTT Classification System](#) includes a Postsecondary Readiness Indicator measuring high school and district success through a combination of student attainment (rates) and year-to-year improvement. It focuses on preparing students for life after high school through five key menu items: AP/IB/Dual Credit completion, Seal of Biliteracy, CTE cluster completion, work-based learning, or ACT benchmarks.

Work-based learning in Nebraska's AQuESTT system connects students with employers to develop technical, academic, and career-readiness skills through paid or unpaid experiences like internships and apprenticeships. This update aligns with efforts to measure student readiness for college, career, and military pathways, moving beyond just proficiency to ensure students are prepared for life after high school.

# Understanding the Postsecondary Readiness Indicator for 2026 State Classifications v.07.14.25



One of the biggest changes in the newest iteration of the AQuESTT Classification System is the addition of the Postsecondary Readiness indicator for high schools and districts. This indicator score is determined by two measurements: Postsecondary Readiness Rate and Postsecondary Readiness Improvement. Complete scoring rules for this indicator and all others will be provided in the 2026 AQuESTT Classification Business Rules at [aquestt.com/resources](http://aquestt.com/resources).

## How is Postsecondary Readiness defined?

- Definition: The percentage of students in the graduating cohort of a school/district meeting one or more of five menu items
- Menu Items:
  - Successfully complete two or more AP/IB/Cambridge/Dual Enrollment courses;
  - Earn the Seal of Biliteracy;
  - Complete two or more intermediate or capstone courses in the same Career and Technical Education (CTE) career cluster program area (earn the Concentrator designation);
  - Successfully complete a work-based learning experience; or
  - Met/Exceeded the Advanced threshold in ELA, Math, and Science on the statewide ACT assessment.

## How will you track student progress in reaching these goals?

- AP/IB/Dual Enrollment courses, CTE Concentrator status, and Work-based learning opportunities will all be tracked by course codes submitted through ADVISER.
  - There are specific course codes for courses that include work-based learning (WBL).
  - All courses can be found within the Course Codes and Clearing Endorsements website: <https://coursecodes.education.ne.gov/>.
  - The WBL codes are either listed under the heading "Career Education Foundational and Specialty" or integrated into a CTE course and whose title includes "with WBL".
- The Seal of Biliteracy Application process will be used to determine if students earn the seal.
- Statewide assessment scores will be used to determine if students have met or exceeded the Advanced threshold for the ACT ELA, Math, and Science scores.

## What students are considered for this indicator?

- Postsecondary Readiness uses the four-year cohort from a year in arrears, like Combined Graduation Rate. So, for the 2026 classification process, the four-year cohort graduating in 2025 is used.
- If a cohort doesn't have 10 members, the previous year's counts for the matching 4-year cohort will be added – e.g. for the 2022-23 classification, if the 2022-23 cohort only has 8 members, the 2020-2021 and 2021-22 cohorts will be added to it.
- A school or district cohort must have at least 10 members for it to be used in the Postsecondary Readiness Indicator.

### How is the Postsecondary Readiness Rate determined?

- Definition: The percentage of students who met at least one of the menu items divided by the total number of students in the cohort.

$$\text{Postsecondary Readiness Rate} = \frac{\text{Students Meeting one or More of the Menu Items}}{\text{Students in the Cohort}}$$

### How is the Postsecondary Readiness Improvement classification level determined?

- A school/district's Postsecondary Readiness Improvement classification level is based on the year-to-year improvement of Postsecondary Readiness rates and is measured using the Simple Improvement scoring methodology.
- **Step 1:** Is the current year's postsecondary readiness rate higher than the previous year's rate? If yes, move to step 2; if no, Improvement score is 1.
- **Step 2:** Does the current year's postsecondary readiness rate meet or exceed the improvement goal? If yes, improvement score is 3; if no, improvement score is 2.

**Calculating the Improvement Goal:** Last Year's Rate + (Last Year's Rate x 0.05)

### How is the Indicator Classification Level determined?

- The Postsecondary Readiness indicator Classification Level is determined by the higher classification level for Postsecondary Readiness Rate and Postsecondary Readiness Improvement.

Indicator	Classification Level
<b>Postsecondary Readiness</b>	<b>3</b>
• Postsecondary Readiness Rate	2
• Postsecondary Readiness Improvement	3

### What weight does Postsecondary Readiness carry?

- At the district level, Postsecondary Readiness carries a weight of 12%.
- At the high school level, Postsecondary Readiness carries a weight of 15%.

Indicator	District	High School
<b>Postsecondary Readiness</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>15%</b>

### How are the Indicator Points calculated?

- Indicator points for Postsecondary Readiness, like all other indicators, are determined by multiplying the Indicator Classification level by the Indicator Weight.

**Indicator Points** = Indicator Classification Level x Indicator Weight

- Indicator Scoring Example: Below is a district example showing the calculation of the Postsecondary Readiness Indicator Points.

Indicator	Score Range	Class. Level	Indicator Weight	Indicator Points
<b>Postsecondary Readiness</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>0.36</b>
• Postsecondary Readiness Rate	90% to 94.99%	2		
• Postsecondary Readiness Improvement	≥ 5% improvement	3		

## Public Forum

Leo Hain and Maelyn Hain addressed the Board in favor of adding a boys and girls Bowling Program at Raymond Central.

## Reports

### Administrative Reports

#### **Submitted by Troy Lurz, Jr-Sr High School Principal Professional Development/Resource Adoption:**

Our next professional development day is scheduled for March 6, and will continue our focus on new learning.

The Science Department continues to narrow its instructional resource options and we met Monday of this week to determine the direction we were planning to go. The team hopes to have a recommendation for consideration after this week. Once selected and agreed to, additional time will be provided for collaborative work as the teachers work to properly induct the materials and their selection.

#### **Walkthroughs vs. Observations: Understanding the Difference in Purpose, Process, and Impact**

As part of our commitment to instructional improvement, I have conducted nearly 270 walkthroughs this year. It is important to clarify that walkthroughs are not observations, even though both involve visiting classrooms.

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### At-a-Glance Comparison

<b>Category</b>	<b>Walkthroughs</b>	<b>Observations</b>
<b>Primary Purpose</b>	Improve systems and instructional practices across teams	Evaluate individual teacher performance
<b>Focus</b>	Instructional trends, professional development implementation, student learning evidence	Individual educator effectiveness aligned to standards
<b>Frequency</b>	Several daily; ongoing throughout the year	A few times per year
<b>Length</b>	5-10 minutes	30-60+ minutes
<b>Data Collected</b>	Often anonymous (our ESU does this), aggregated, trend-based	Individual, standards-based, evaluative
<b>Comparison Level</b>	Grade level, subject, PLC, school-wide	Teacher compared to professional standards

**Follow-Up**

Team conversations, PLC discussions, system adjustments, Administrative considerations

1-on-1 post-observation conference

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**Our Rationale**

We use a program called TeachBoost to collect and warehouse our observation/ walkthrough data. Observations are part of the formal teacher evaluation process. They are structured, longer in duration (a full period by policy), and aligned to Nebraska and Raymond Central School district Professional Educator Standards. During an observation, Raymond Central administrators evaluate one teacher's performance against established standards such as lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices. The data collected is specific to that educator and is followed by an individual post-observation conference focused on strengths, growth areas, and overall job performance.

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**ACT Day:** This year's PreACT and ACT assessments will take place on March 24. Students participating in testing will complete their required assessments, while those not testing will engage in structured off-campus educational and career exploration experiences. Tasha and Celia have coordinated field trips to a variety of institutions and businesses to provide meaningful, real-world learning opportunities. This will be a full and important day for students and staff, supporting both academic accountability and career readiness at RCHS.

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**Counseling: Tasha and Celia**

- Mini College/Career/Military Fair date: March 11 - We would love to have local businesses come set up a booth for our career fairs. Please spread the word and have people contact tasha.osten@rcentral.org.- Amazing feedback from reps that our kids and staff are attentive and purposeful when visiting booths!
- Scheduling and planning for next year has started
- Dual Credit Night was March 2 open for grades 9-11
- March 24 ACT Day
- April 13 NEST 529 parent information session at Valparaiso Elementary
- May 9 Graduation

**High School Student Council:** The Raymond Central High School Student Council is proud to announce that they are organizing a community blood drive in partnership with the Nebraska Community Blood Bank. Because this blood drive supports the community blood bank, all donated blood stays right here in our local community, helping neighbors, friends, and families when they need it most.

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We appreciate the continued support of our school and community as our students lead by example and give back in a powerful way.

**JH Student Council:** The Middle School dance has been rescheduled for Friday, April 24 from 7:00-9:00pm. Students are excited for THE middle school event of the year! A portion of our proceeds will go toward the Nebraska Make-A-Wish Foundation.

**Submitted by Tony Kobza, Asst Jr-Sr High School Principal/Athletic Director**

#### Activities

**FBLA** - Looking ahead, the next RC FBLA Craft Fair is scheduled for March 21, 2026. FBLA is also launching a business clothes closet to provide members and RC students with professional clothing for competitions and the workforce. More details will be shared soon.

**One Act** - The Drama Program is gearing up for the Drama Showcase and the Spring Musical (to be announced), as well as our two planned show experiences coming up during the spring semester: *Hadestown* (based on Greek Mythology) and *Capital City* (based on Mari Sandoz's novel), both at the Lied Center. Beyond being a great deal of fun, experiences like this are invaluable to the students' learning because they can observe the "best of the best" in the performing arts and take inspiration for their own art, strengthening skills they use in and out of rehearsal.

**Quiz Bowl** - The school qualified a team to attend the National Academic Quiz Bowl Tournament in Chicago in April. Students who will be attending are: Drew Tice, Sophia Burt, Deacon Christensen, and Marissa Tvrdy.

#### Facilities/MTAF

Created parking area on the well field that can be used for overflow parking attached to current and future parking areas.

MTAF is over \$1 million raised through donations, sponsorships, fundraising, grants and in-kind commitments. The driveway is paved and close to being usable. This will affect traffic flow in a positive way.

We are working on fundraising and grants that will help us continue to show progress. Driveway is a major step.

Next steps are: Site Drainage, Fence and perimeter curb for playing surface, Final Grading for field, Rock and perimeter drain for sub base, and Turf Installation.

**Submitted by Abby Horbach, Asst Jr-Sr High School Principal**

February has been all about consistency and continued progress within our Advisory and Intervention framework. While there are no major updates to report, the steady implementation of our systems is producing meaningful results.

We are seeing a significant increase in missing assignments being completed, overall grade improvement, and stronger student accountability for their work completion and most importantly, their learning. Students are becoming more proactive in monitoring their academic progress and taking responsibility for meeting expectations. The development of executive functioning skills (e.g., organization, communication, follow-through, and time management) continues to be a central focus, and we are confident these skills will have a lasting impact on students both educationally and professionally.

This progress is a direct reflection of our teachers’ dedication and flexibility. Second semester brought meaningful changes to our structures, and our staff have embraced those adjustments with professionalism and a student-centered mindset. I would like to personally thank our teachers for the hard work and intentional effort they continue to invest in supporting student success.

Good things are happening, and we look forward to continuing this positive momentum as we move through the remainder of the semester.

**Submitted by Elementary Principals Steve Rose and Deb Kruse  
2026-2027 Elementary Classroom Staff**

Kdg	Andrea Woita	Courtney Barry	Lillian Gansebom
1st	Cindy Peterson	Makenzie Ronspies	Karlie Hanson
2nd	Abby Spangler	Taryn Rohde	Molly Barnett
3rd	Hannah Kring	Rachael Mika	Sarah Millet
4th	Nikole Joy	Erin Gravatt-Brewer	Darrin Pokorny
5th	Kendra Carlson	Kathleen Halstead	

**2026-2027 Hires**

**Kindergarten - Lillian Gansebom**

Lillian is currently student teaching in Gretna while completing her Reading Specialist degree. We are excited to welcome her to our kindergarten team.

**1st Grade - Karlie Hanson**

Karlie brings several years of experience working in LPS and is currently teaching in David City. She holds degrees in special education and administration, and we look forward to the knowledge and

experiences she will bring to first grade.

### **2nd Grade - Molly Barnett**

Molly has several years of teaching experience in LPS. She has also served as an instructional coach and special education coordinator, providing her with a strong background in both instruction and support services.

### **3rd Grade - Rachael Mika**

Rachael has a few years experience teaching at Blessed Sacrament in Lincoln. She lives in Ceresco.

### **3rd Grade - Sarah Millet**

Sarah has many years experience teaching elementary. She has a Master's Degree and has been subbing for us this year. She is the long term substitute for Makenna Jones.

### **PLC Data Meetings**

Last week we had our PLC Data Meetings. Each grade level looked at weekly data as well as the progress monitoring data of students in intervention. Some adjustments were made.

Kindergarten: Teachers have found more time in the day to pull students who aren't making adequate progress with nonsense word fluency.

1st: Teachers have included fluency work as part of their morning routine to increase automaticity.

2nd: Data shows what they are doing is working. They will continue to have students apply concepts throughout curricular areas.

3rd: Students need more practice with automaticity. They will add fluency slides to the start of WIN groups for all groups and continue with reading Morph passages.

4th: Data shows that students need practice in automaticity. Teachers will model fluent reading and continue evidence based fluency practices.

5th: Data shows that some students are accurate but not automatic. These students will receive fluency interventions. Students will set goals and monitor their progress.

### **Professional Learning**

The Professional Learning Team met on February 26 to plan for our upcoming March 6 professional learning session focused on our Instructional Model.

As we continue progressing through the model, we are now entering Phase 4: Make Sense of Learning. This phase emphasizes helping students process, solidify, and internalize their learning through structured support and collaboration.

During our March 6 session, we will focus on two key strategies:

1. **Guided Initial Application with Formative Feedback**  
Teachers provide structured opportunities for students to begin applying new learning while receiving timely, specific feedback to refine understanding and correct misconceptions.
2. **Peer-Assisted Consolidation of Learning**  
Students work collaboratively to deepen understanding, clarify thinking, and strengthen mastery through structured peer interaction.

Our goal is to build clarity around what these strategies look like in practice and how they strengthen student ownership and understanding.

[RC Instructional Model](#)

### **Submitted by Amanda Coufal, Director of Special Education**

#### **Indicator 13 Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Training:**

Indicator 13 training was held on February 12, for IEP case managers who work with students with transition plans included in their IEPs. The training was well received and will strengthen our ability to develop compliant, high-quality transition plans moving forward. As a reminder, our recent review identified only two minor documentation errors related to inviting outside agencies and completing the

four-year course plan within the IEP. Both issues have been corrected and the revisions have been submitted to NDE.

**NASES Legislative Conference:**

Caitlin Roussan and I attended the first day of the Legislative Conference in Lincoln on February 19. (The second day was canceled due to inclement weather.) The sessions included:

- Top 4 areas of noncompliance in Nebraska:
  - Developing an appropriate IEP
  - Measurable Ambitious Goals
  - Implementation Failures
  - Placement Decisions
  
- Roundtable Sessions:
  - Model IEP and Guidance
  - LRE Guidance
  - Literacy Project Plan
  - Transportation Guidance
  - Requirement for working with contracted programs for students with disabilities

**Special Education Policies and Procedures:**

The Special Education Policies and Procedures document has been reviewed and updated to reflect current transition requirements. The following has been added:

**XX. Transition Part B:**

Percent of youth with IEPs in Nebraska, aged 14 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age-appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student’s transition services needs. There also must be evidence that the student was invited to the IEP Team meeting where transition services are to be discussed and evidence that, if appropriate, a representative of any participating agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services, including, if appropriate, pre-employment transition services, was invited to the IEP Team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority. (20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(B)).

Task	Person Ordinarily Responsible	Typical Timeframe	Applicable Forms (if any)
Transition Plan in IEP	Case Manager, Special Education Director	Annually	IEP

Measurable Postsecondary and IEP Goals that are Updated Annually	Case Manager, Special Education Director	Annually	IEP
Transition Assessments & Services are Updated Annually	Case Manager, Special Education Director	Annually	IEP Transition Assessments
Courses of Study Listed in Transition Plan	Case Manager, Special Education Director, School Counselor	Annually	IEP Course Curriculum
Student Invited to the IEP Meeting	Case Manager	Annually	IEP
Representative Invited to the Meeting with Prior Consent of the Parent or Student who has Reached the Age of Majority	Case Manager	Annually	IEP Consent to Invite Outside Agency

March 2025 Board Report  
Mr. Steven Rose and Mrs. Deb Kruse  
Principal | Elementary

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## Board Report JH/HS: March 2026

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## Our Rationale

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**FBLA:**

Looking ahead, the next RC FBLA Craft Fair is scheduled for March 21, 2026.

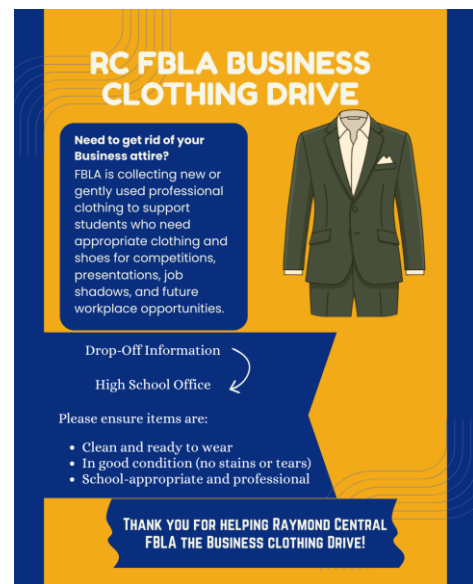
FBLA has launched a business clothing closet. Thank you for all of the donations we have already received.

**Abby Horbach-Assistant Principal/MTSS**

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February Board Report  
Amanda Coufal  
Director of Special Education

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**Caitlin Roussan and myself attended the first day of the Legislative Conference held in Lincoln (the second day was snowed out). The sessions entailed:**

- **Top areas of noncompliance in NE (**

NASES Legislative Conference

2/19 and 2/20

Policy and Procedures Updated

February 2026 AD Board Report  
Mr. Tony Kobza  
Assistant Principal/AD

### **AD Newsletter**

I will include links to our weekly newsletter laying out the upcoming events as well as the successes from the previous week. Please take a look at them below with more in depth information:

[2/8/26](#)

[2/15/26](#)

[2/22/26](#)

### **Facilities**

We moved and updated the senior pictures screen as well as updated the valedictorian and salutatorian plaques. We will continue to add to the Academic Wall with the help of the Teacher Leadership Team.

We are working to design updated recognition for the banners in the gym as well as CTSO, Activities and Athletics historical recognition.

### **Activities**

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FBLA is also launching a business clothes closet to provide members and RC students with professional clothing for competitions and the workforce. More details will be shared soon.

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**Quiz Bowl** - The school qualified a team to attend the National Academic Quiz Bowl Tournament in Chicago again this year. Students who will be attending are: Drew Tice, Sophia Burt, Deacon Christensen, and Marissa Tvrdy.

**Band:** We will have our second JH pep band on February 2nd for the girls JH basketball game. If this goes well, it is my plan to add one JH football and JH volleyball game next year, and possibly make this a tradition to do one junior pep band game per sport. HS will kick off their first basketball pep band on December 11th.

### **Facilities/MTAF**

Created parking area on the well field that can be used for overflow parking attached to current and future parking areas.

MTAF is over \$1 million raised through donations, sponsorships, fundraising, grants and in-kind commitments. The driveway is paved and close to being usable. This will affect traffic flow in a positive way.

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Next steps are:

- Site Drainage
- Fence and perimeter curb for playing surface
- Final Grading for field
- Rock and perimeter drain for sub base
- Turf Installation

Student Board Member Report  
Superintendent's Report

Results from the Federal Food Service Audit in Ceresco on February 18 were shared with the Board.

Superintendent Hanson gave an update on Legislative Bills in Congress.

There will be a Vision Committee Meeting on March 19.

The Raymond Central District Strategic Plan will need to be updated. The old one was from 2019-2025.

An attendance update was given: HS 93.61%, MS 94.87%, 3-5 95.1%, K-2 95.58%.

Area	Findings ID	Finding Description
300 - Meal Counting and Claiming	V-0300	The SFA is not following its State Agency approved application. 7 CFR 210.9(b) The POS is stated as electronic on the application. It is a roster check off system.
1600 - School Breakfast and SFSP Outreach	V-1600	The Sponsor did not provide documentation that Summer Food Service Program outreach was conducted. 7 CFR 210.12(d)
800 - Civil Rights	V-0800	All Program materials do not include the correct nondiscrimination statement. FNS Instruction 113-1
1100 - Smart Snacks	V-1100	The SFA's process for ensuring non-packaged or recipe based items are in compliance with Smart Snacks rules does not yield an accurate result.
500 - Offer versus Serve	V-0500	Offer versus Serve reimbursable meal signage is not posted, including the requirement for students to select at least 1/2 cup fruit or vegetable.
400 - Meal Components and Quantities - Breakfast	V-0400	Signage is not posted near or at the beginning of the serving line identifying what constitutes a reimbursable meal for breakfast.7 CFR 220.8(a)(2) Unit pricing.
1400 - Food Safety	V-1400	The Sponsor is not in compliance with the Buy American provision. Noncompliant food items were observed and the director is not tracking cost of non-domestic items for compliance with the 10% threshold.
800 - Civil Rights	V-0800	The current "And Justice for All" poster is not visible by the students. FNS Instruction 113-1 Section B Methods of Public Notification

Raymond Central Public Schools, Ceresco Elementary  
February 18, 2026  
Review Month – January 2026

Commendations: Staff was readily available throughout the day and was prepared for the onsite review. Staff was receptive to program administration feedback.

Food looked appetizing and the children seemed to enjoy the meals

SFA Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ . (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ . (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

This report is tentative and subject to a QA review. Findings may be revised, removed or added.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



**Raymond Central Public Schools  
District Strategic Plan 2019-2025**

**These goals were formulated by the Board of Education following a series of stakeholder meetings in the Spring of 2019. The input and feedback from community members, students and staff was essential to the formulation of goals that will serve the District into the future.**

**Goal 1 - Increase the number of students that meet or exceed normal growth rates**

- Performance Indicator (1): Students will be provided rigorous academic and real-life learning opportunities to become college and career ready.
- Performance Indicator (2): Develop and implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) based on a needs-driven model ensuring students at all levels and sites have access to appropriate resources to accelerate performance proficiencies.
- Performance Indicator (3): Teachers will utilize effective instructional models, including differentiation, based on research and best practice with curriculum aligned to national, state and local standards while continuously assessing and monitoring student progress.
- Performance Indicator (4): Increase Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP) scores to meet or exceed national growth rates from first data collection points to additional collection points through the academic year.
- Performance Indicator (5): The Board of Education will review student growth data in Reading, Math, and Social, Emotional Behavior, from results in the Formative Assessment System for Teachers, at a minimum of three times per year (fall, mid-year, and spring).
- Performance Indicator (6): The district will research and develop a Capstone experience for Raymond Central students serving as a culminating project, or senior exhibition, that will encourage students to incorporate life skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, written and oral communication, and goal setting as they prepare to exit from their #RCJourney and enter a career, college, military or adult life as a responsible citizen in an ever-changing society.
- Performance Indicator (7): The district will research, design and implement a grading and assessment philosophy based on research and best practice.

**Goal 2 - Research and implement strategies to recruit, hire, develop, support, and retain the highest quality staff**

- Performance Indicator (1): Develop and implement pathways for teacher leaders that allow them to gain leadership experience and expertise through professional collaboration with other teachers and administrators.
- Performance Indicator (2): To encourage high performance, develop and implement a performance-based program that recognizes individuals for their accomplishments.
- Performance Indicator (3): Review 2019-2025 staff exit surveys to determine patterns and trends.
- Performance Indicator (4): [Research and implement an online resource for accepting applications for all open positions.] *[completed 2019-2020]*

### **Goal 3 - Increase Student Enrollment**

- Performance Indicator (1): Develop a positive ratio of option-enrolled students through advertising and showcasing the accomplishments of Raymond Central students using a variety of social and media outlets.

### **Goal 4 - Maintain and Improve Current Facilities**

- Performance Indicator (1): Continue to update the RC 5-10 year facilities plan.
- Performance Indicator (2): Explore creative/innovative classroom and campus concepts.
- Performance Indicator (3): Hire a consultant to assist in future facility planning including the construction of a Performing Arts Center.

### **Goal 5 - Technology**

- Performance Indicator (1): Continue to stay up-to-date with devices and infrastructure.
- Performance Indicator (2): Update and maintain the district website frequently to keep all stakeholders informed.
- Performance Indicator (3): Teachers will utilize technology targeting student-centered learning, differentiated instruction and digital citizenship. The district will provide training opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills in this area.

### **Goal 6 - Staff Professional Development**

- Performance Indicator (1): Provide meaningful and relevant staff development training to improve instruction. Professional Learning Communities will be the major vehicle for accomplishing this task by using teacher collaboration.
  - Professional learning opportunities will focus on increasing knowledge and use of differentiation strategies within all classrooms.
  - Increasing student engagement is also critical. PLCs will play a vital role in implementing these strategies.

- Performance Indicator (2): Develop a data collection process to ensure high yield instructional strategies are implemented with fidelity to the GANAG lesson design.

### **Goal 7 - Mental Health Action Plan**

- Performance Indicator (1): Provide ongoing professional development in mental health issues for staff, students, parents and community.
- Performance Indicator (2): Develop and implement a progress monitoring evaluation tool for RC mental health programs: Move This World Social/Emotional Curriculum (PK-6); mental health therapist (7-12); other.

### **Goal 8 - Ensure all students learn in a safe environment**

- Performance Indicator (1): Conduct annual external safety audits at each school site.
- Performance Indicator (2): Develop and implement a district-wide reunification plan as part of the adopted standard response protocol.
- Performance Indicator (3): Provide ongoing safety training for staff and students.
- [Performance Indicator (4): [The district will research and implement an anonymous reporting app for students, parents, and staff that will be used in partnership between the school and law enforcement.] *[completed 2019-2020]*
- Performance indicator (5): Continue to engage all stakeholders in school safety issues.

## Raymond Central Attendance Update

	Attendance Rate	At Risk Attendance Rate below 87%
High School	93.61%	16
Junior High	94.87%	9
3-5	95.1%	6
K-2	95.58%	3

LB 765: This is on select file- There is a lot of opposition to this bill from the education, financial, and construction communities.

LB 765 is a bill regarding school bond issue elections. Successful bond issue elections related to schools and educational service units would require a voter turnout of at least 50.1% of qualified electors in the district before they can pass. It also prohibits public funds from being used to promote or campaign for such elections. I have sent a letter opposing this bill.- Hearing February 11, 2026

LB 1050: Nothing has advanced

LB 1050 seeks to improve early literacy in Nebraska by:

- Identifying third-grade students who are and are not able to read at or above grade level, as determined by the established threshold set by the Department of Education; and
- Retaining certain third-grade students who can not read at or above grade level; and
- Ensuring retained third-grade students with persistent reading deficiencies receive intensive intervention courses. Hearing January 27, 2026

LB 1146- This is still in the education committee- my fear is that they will package some of these bills.

LB 1146 amends section 79-209 to revise provisions relating to student absences and reports by a school district to a county attorney. The bill provides that a student may have up to twenty unexcused absences in a school year before a school district is required to refer the matter to the county attorney. The following shall not be considered unexcused absences. Absences excused by a parent, guardian, or educational decision-maker due to a student's physical or mental illness; absences of pregnant or parenting students in accordance with a developed policy as defined in section 79-530; absences of students with an individualized family service plan (IFSP); absences of students with an individualized education program (IEP); absences of students receiving accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; or absences of students receiving special education services or who are eligible for services under the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program

Ask about the Governors Statement on Turning point USA

**LB 1038: Not going to make it out of committee**

**The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby.**

- Increase the number of school districts receiving state equalization aid,
- Drop the maximum levy rate from \$1.05 to \$0.50 per \$100 of taxable valuation,
- Institute a \$0.30 base levy adjustment,
- Repurposes the property tax credits authorized under the Property Tax Credit Act and the School District Property Tax Relief Act, and
- Maintain school district General Fund levy rates within a \$0.20 range by utilizing existing state resources. Hearing February 2, 2026

LB 653: Passed

LB 653 seeks to strengthen access to option enrollment for students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) by:

- Funding upfront the cost of IEP option students who require substantially more funding than the average per-pupil cost
- Requires the percentage of IEP students denied option enrollment to be proportional to the total percent of option enrollment denials
- Requires a district to not deny option enrollment to a student if their sibling is already an option student within that district
- Improves reporting requirements on the Department of Education's Option Enrollment Rejection Report This is at the select file stage

LB 1219: This is on General File as of February 24th

LB1219 simply limits the total amount of property taxes that may be levied by any political subdivision to 2% plus real growth. Hearing February 5, 2026

LB 940:

LB 940 would prohibit the use of certain artificial color additives in school meals

LB 1022:

LB 1022 seeks to remove barriers to obtaining an educator certificate or permit by eliminating the state's human relations training requirement.

LB 824:

LB824 changes the bona fide separation period for school retirement plans—from the current 180 days to 120 days—to provide uniformity and consistency with Nebraska's other public plans, including state employees, county employees, judges, and state patrol

LB 384:

LB 384 revises Nebraska's "Truth in Taxation" law by requiring a majority of the governing board members of a property taxing entity exceeding its allowable growth rate to attend the corresponding joint public hearing.

LB 1024:

LB 1024 seeks to ensure the history of communism is included within the state's social studies curriculum.

LB 1097:

LB 1097 creates the State and Political Subdivisions Sexual Abuse Liability Act. Under this Act a cause of action will be created for minors or individuals with developmental disabilities who experience sexual assault by an employee or a person under the supervision of a political subdivision. This Act would also waive sovereign immunity for political subdivisions.

LB 1207:

LB1207 requires school districts to give each full-time employee five mental health leave each fiscal year without documentation from a medical or mental health provider.

LB 966:

The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby: The Hunger Free Schools Act will create a state reimbursement to schools for the cost of meals over the federal reimbursement rate for students that qualify for reduced cost meals, thereby making the meal free for the student.

Classified Staff Hire(s)/Reassignment(s)/Resignation(s)

Resignations have been received from Jennifer Hoffschneider, HS Head Cook and Patty Hudson, Food Service Coordinator.

NASB Monthly Update

# NASB BOARD NOTES

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FROM THE NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS



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## IN THIS MONTH'S EDITION OF BOARD NOTES

This Month In ...

Training, Networking, Engagement & Upcoming Events

At The Board Table

Board Presidents Gather on Presidents' Day!

Do You Know an Inspiring Teacher?

Halfway Through: Legislative Priorities for the Next 30 Days

NASB's Annual Membership Drive is Happening Now

State Education Conference: Call for Proposals - Due March 13

NASB Expanding Its Policy Services

Spring into Upcoming Items & Events!

Your 2026 NASB Affiliates

Your NASB Board of Directors & Staff

... And Much More!

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# Snapshots



# THIS MONTH IN ...

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<https://members.nasbonline.org/>

## THIS MONTH IN ...

A quick snapshot of the various programs, services, support and events NASB has planned for its members in the coming month!

**ADVOCACY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ...** The 2026 Legislative Session is over halfway through as Day 30 of 60 was last Friday. Priority Bills have been designated so we have an idea of which items will be discussed in the final 30 days, as full floor debate begins on Tuesday, March 3rd. Join us as we are out and about, talk to us about coming to Lincoln, and stay engaged as we continually update the NASB Bills page at <https://nasb.envisiams.com/legislative-bills> ... Call Colby & Matt any time!

**ALICAP ...** February is peak "slips, trips and falls" season. Remind all school staff to wear their snow boots into the building, and tote their dress shoes with, to put on after entering the building. Let's keep the valuable staff safe!

**BOARD LEADERSHIP ...** Check out "At the Board Table" on Page 4 to learn about all things Board Leadership!

**EDUCATION LEADERSHIP SEARCH SERVICE ...** We are facilitating an Interim Superintendent Search process for North Platte Public Schools. The district will be hiring an Interim for the 2026-27 school year. If you are interested, please contact Shari at [sbecker@NASBonline.org](mailto:sbecker@NASBonline.org) for this or anything Search related.

**ENERGY PURCHASING ...** In late January, an unprecedented cold spell stretched across much of the U.S., driving extraordinary demand for natural gas and causing spot market prices to surge to more than \$70 per dekatherm. Because of the proactive purchasing strategy employed by NJUMP and CJUMP, much of the natural gas secured on behalf of participating schools was locked in at prices below \$5.00 per dekatherm. This long-term planning and disciplined approach to risk management protected our member districts from extreme market volatility and significant unexpected cost increases. Participation in NJUMP and CJUMP continues to provide schools with both financial savings and administrative efficiency. By leveraging collective purchasing power, monitoring market conditions year-round, and executing timely procurement strategies, we help stabilize energy costs so school leaders can focus resources on students and classrooms rather than utility market fluctuations. We will continue to actively monitor national and global natural gas markets and strategically secure supply for upcoming seasons, with the goal of delivering stability, transparency, and value to our member schools.

**FOUNDATION ...** The ElevateED Foundation is awarding two \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors who are pursuing higher education to become a teacher in a Nebraska public school system. Students with plans to attend college or university in Nebraska, have a minimum GPA of 3.0, and whose school district is a member of NASB qualify to apply. Deadline to apply is March 14. The application can be found at <https://www.elevateedfoundation.org/>

**GALLUP STRENGTHS ...** Our featured strength this month is **Communication**. People strong in Communication have a gift for making ideas resonate. Rather than just sharing information, they bring messages to life and make content stick. They choose the right words, stories and tone to help others understand, connect and act. They are often good story tellers as well. Want to know if Communication is in your Top 5? Contact Shari to take the Gallup assessment.

**MEMBER ENGAGEMENT ...** 2026 is off to a great start with the Legislative Issues Conference and Board President Retreat already completed. Events coming soon are: Budget & Finance Workshops, Amplified Finance Workshop, NAEP State Convention, and the 2026 Federal Advocacy Fly-In, in DC, which we now have a wait list for as it has filled up. Member Engagement visits this month include: Boone Central, Boyd County, Crofton, Dorchester, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge, Niobrara, Randolph, Verdigre, Wisner-Pilger, and Wynot.

**POLICY SERVICES ...** See our latest update on NASB's Policy Services on Page 9.

**TECHNOLOGY ...** We want to hear from you! Take our quick survey and let us know how we're doing. Your feedback helps us improve our services to better meet your needs. Click to get started! <https://bit.ly/4tNzuMk> - Send your updated negotiated agreement to Darion or reach out with any questions you have when updating your information.

# TRAINING, NETWORKING, ENGAGEMENT & EVENTS

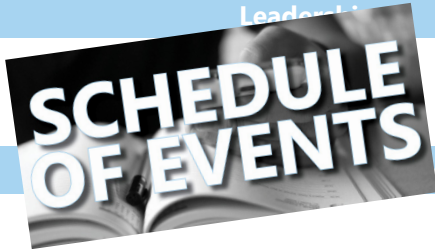
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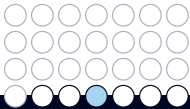


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<https://members.nasbonline.org/events>

To register for an NASB event, click on the 'My Membership' link, then navigate to the 'Events' dropdown and select 'Register'. If you do not have an email and password to log in or have forgotten it, please contact NASB at 402-423-4951 for assistance.

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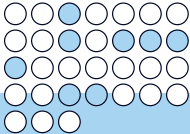


FEBRUARY  
2026

FEBRUARY

**NASB Legislative Lunch - Wednesday, February 25 - Pender**

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MARCH  
2026

MARCH

**NASB Legislative Lunch - Tuesday, March 3 - St. Paul**

**Budget & Finance Workshop - Tuesday, March 10 - Seward\***

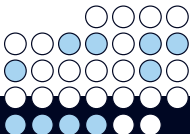
**COSSBA Annual Conference - March 12-15 - Louisville, KY**

**Budget & Finance Workshop - Tuesday, March 24 - West Point\***

**NAEP State Convention - March 24-25 - Kearney\***



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APRIL  
2026

APRIL

**Budget & Finance Workshop - Tuesday, April 7 - Ogallala\***

**Amplified Budget & Finance Workshop - Wednesday, April 8 - Kearney\***

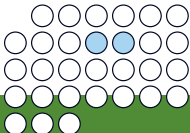
**NSBA National Conference - April 10-12 - San Antonio, TX**

**Final Day of the 2026 Legislative Session - Friday, April 17**

**2026 NASB Federal Advocacy Fly-In - April 26-29 - Washington, DC**



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JUNE  
2026

JUNE

**NASB Member Golf Outing - Wednesday, June 10 - Kearney Country Club**

**School Law Seminar - June 10-11 - Kearney**

# AT THE BOARD TABLE

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## YOUR NASB BOARD LEADERSHIP UPDATE

<https://members.nasbonline.org/board-leadership>



2026

### MARCH BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

Board Presidents and Superintendents: Please check your inbox for the [sample] **March Board Meeting Agenda** that was emailed to you on Friday, February 13, 2026, from [shiggins@NASBonline.org](mailto:shiggins@NASBonline.org). This agenda is aligned with the NASB Annual Board Calendar. If you have any questions or would like the email resent, please contact Stacie at 402-209-1608.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**2026 is an Election Year!** Important dates to add to the Board Calendar:

- February 17 was last day for incumbents (any current office holder) to file for office on the primary ballot. (§32-606)
- March 2 is the last day for non-incumbents (new filers) to file for office for the primary election. (§32- 606)
- **NASB Board Leadership will distribute a quick survey to all board-superintendent administrative support staff requesting a list of the incumbents who are up for re-election and confirmation of those who filed to seek another term. Please feel free to email Marcia at [mherring@NASBonline.org](mailto:mherring@NASBonline.org) or Stacie Higgins at [shiggins@NASBonline.org](mailto:shiggins@NASBonline.org) with this information.**

**NASB 2026 Board Candidate Workshops** will be coming to a place near you! NASB will be on the road in June, July and August providing an information meeting for board candidates who are seeking election to the board. Check out the upcoming schedule:

- June 2 - Ainsworth, Hastings, and O'Neill
- June 3 - Broken Bow, Ogallala, and Wayne
- August 4 - Alliance and Beatrice
- August 5 - McCook and Omaha

#### NASB 2026 New Board Member Workshop Schedule

- December 7 - Ainsworth, Alliance, and Broken Bow
- December 8 - O'Neill
- December 9 - Ogallala and Beatrice
- January 5 - McCook and Wayne
- January 6 - Hastings and Omaha

For more information about **NASB Board Leadership Services**, including: Board Retreats, Strategic Planning, Community Engagement and Alignment, Online Survey Services/Superintendent Evaluation, Board Self-Assessment, Board Resources, or Board Governance publications, please contact:

Marcia Herring - Katie Corfield - Stacie Higgins - Ben Anderjaska - Stephanie Summers - Avary Pansing-Brooks - Becky Erdkamp

# BOARD PRESIDENTS GATHER ON PRESIDENTS' DAY!

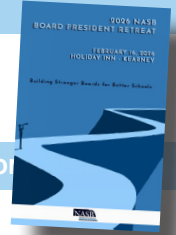
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<https://members.nasbonline.org/events/board-president-retreat>

The Board Leadership team extends their sincere appreciation to the board members, superintendents, and ESU administrators who attended the 2026 NASB Board President Retreat, held on Presidents' Day in Kearney. Your engagement, thoughtful dialogue, and shared experiences made the event both meaningful and impactful.



Feedback we received reflects a strong and positive experience, particularly following the interactive scenarios, open discussions, and Q&A session. The practical, real-world examples and collaborative dialogue provided meaningful preparation for complex governance challenges.

We also extend our appreciation to our noon presenters from ImpactED. If you would like to learn more about this Nebraska-based company providing math instructional supports for teachers, please visit ImpactED's website at <https://impactedglobal.com/>. To explore the Professional Learning Library, select "Watch as Guest" to browse available content. You will have full access to 5V05 (Understand, represent, and solve problems involving the multiplication of a fraction by a whole number). Additional videos are available in preview format; for full access, you may contact Merritt at [merritt@impactedglobal.com](mailto:merritt@impactedglobal.com) to request database access.

Board-Superintendent leadership matters. The intentional work you are doing to strengthen communication, clarify roles, and focus on student success does not go unnoticed. It was a privilege for the Board Leadership team to facilitate these important conversations with you, and we look forward to continuing to walk alongside you in further learning opportunities.



# DO YOU KNOW AN INSPIRING TEACHER?

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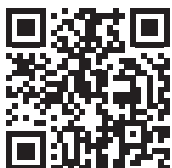


## DO YOU KNOW AN INSPIRING TEACHER?

**Nominate them to win a Huskers VIP experience!**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska is teaming up with Husker Athletics to sponsor **Touchdown for Teachers**, a celebration of the amazing educators across Nebraska who make our communities great.

The winning teachers will receive a special classroom visit from Herbie Husker and will be recognized by Nebraska Athletics this spring!



**Nominate your favorite teacher through March 1.**



# HALFWAY THROUGH: PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 30 DAYS

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<https://members.nasbonline.org/government-relations>

Friday, February 20, marked the halfway point of the 2026 Legislative Session. Priority Bills have been designated so we know which items will be debated in the final 30 days, as full floor debate begins on Tuesday, March 3rd. Here are some key bills and items to watch, including some CALL TO ACTION items. Follow and frequent both the NASB GR page linked above AND the NASB Bills page as it is constantly updated. Last Friday, NASB hosted a virtual Legislative Update for our members. All of the bills and items discussed can be found on our GR page titled "Day 30 Update - 2026 Priority Designations Etc (2/20/26)" Below are four key items to pay close attention to from the full list.



<https://nasb.envisiams.com/legislative-bills>

## Priority Designations

- LB 937** (Education) Change provisions relating to option enrollment, reading, dyslexia, reporting, teacher apprenticeships, teacher recruitment and retention, and the College Pathway Program  
**Education Committee Priority ... Likely to be a vehicle for other measures**  
*Annual NDE "clean up" bill. Significant pushback regarding a provision to reduce reporting requirements of districts regarding students with reading difficulty.*
- LB 1050** (Murman at the request of the Governor) Amend the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act to limit advancement to grade four  
**Education Committee Priority ... Look for a CALL TO ACTION to contact your Senator soon!**
- LB 1219** (Brandt) Limit the amount of property taxes that may be levied by a political subdivision  
**Sen. Hansen Priority ... Voted out of Committee on 2/18/26**  
**Look for a CALL TO ACTION to contact your Senator soon!**  
*Limits levy to prior year allowable growth. Allowable growth percentage means a percentage equal to the sum of two percent plus the political subdivision's real growth percentage.*
- Agency 23** A \$7 million dollar appropriation of Department of Labor to be used for scholarship grants to non-public students  
**Look for a CALL TO ACTION to contact your Senator if this is a part of the reported budget**

# OF BILLS TRACKING

97

BILLS WE TESTIFIED ON

16

THOSE WE SUPPORT

11

THOSE WE OPPOSE

28

**Thanks to the following SBMs who testified and carried the torch of local control this session!**

Lisa Albers (Grand Island), Jane Erdenberger (Omaha), Patti Gubbels (Norfolk), Stacy Jolley (Millard), Gary Kubicek (Norris), Erick Lee (Arapahoe-Holbrook), Lisa Nichols (Pleasanton), Joe Pick (Bennington), Jason Richters (Centennial), Charles Riedesel (Beatrice), Dan Scheer (St. Paul), Dave Welsch (Milford), Mary Yilk (ESU 9)

As well as all of you who reached out to your Senator(s), came to Lincoln, joined us for lunch or a call, and engaged in many other ways the past few months! Keep up the good work, we'll need more of it here soon!

# NASB'S ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IS HAPPENING NOW

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NASB is here to be your partner and resource. We love the time we spend with you, whether it is at events, the Capitol, or in your districts. The annual Membership Drive is happening now. We appreciate your membership and look forward to a great 2026-2027 serving you!

*Reminder ... 2% discount on dues paid by April 1, 2026*

## STATE EDUCATION CONFERENCE: CALL FOR PROPOSALS

NOVEMBER 18-20 ... CHI CENTER ... OMAHA ... SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSALS NOW  
CONTACT SHARON WITH QUESTIONS ... [SENDORF@NASBONLINE.ORG](mailto:SENDORF@NASBONLINE.ORG)

Login to <https://nasb.envisiams.com/proposals> to submit a breakout session proposal.  
Deadline for proposal submissions is 5:00 PM CT, Friday, March 13th.

**BUILDING  
STRONG  
FUTURES**



# NASB EXPANDING ITS POLICY SERVICES

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NASB is pleased to share enhancements to our Policy Services that strengthen our capacity to provide high-quality, comprehensive services through new and expanded partnerships.

## **SPARQ Online Publishing (SOP)**

NASB has partnered with SPARQ Data Solutions to integrate district policy manuals into the SPARQ Online Publishing platform. SOP is a professional, web-based policy governance system that enhances accessibility, organization, and policy management.

## **Perry Law Firm**

NASB has partnered with Perry Law Firm to provide a comprehensive policy manual and ongoing policy updates. Perry Law Firm is a long-established Nebraska school law firm with a strong reputation for high-quality legal guidance and policy development.

## **Expanded NASB Policy Services through Board Leadership**

- Policy Review Services – Led by NASB’s Board Leadership Department to equip boards and administrators with a purposeful, timely policy review schedule.
- Aligned Handbook Support Services – Provided through NASB’s Board Leadership Department.
- Administrative Guidelines Support – Assistance in aligning administrative guidelines to the board’s adopted policy manual.

**Contact Lindsey Headrick or Marcia Herring for more information!**



# ORDER YOUR NEBRASKA ED LAW BOOKS TODAY

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There is still time to order the 2025 Nebraska Education Laws Book! To streamline the process, please submit your order directly to Colleen Saia at LexisNexis by calling 937-247-8171 or by email at [colleen.m.saia@lexisnexis.com](mailto:colleen.m.saia@lexisnexis.com). Please include the number of print books and/or eBooks you wish to purchase, along with your tax-exempt documentation. Tiered pricing is as follows: 1 book = \$103, 2-24 books = \$97.85 each, 25-49 books = \$92.70 each, 50-149 books = \$82.40 each, 150-399 books = \$72.10 each, 400-999 books = \$61.80 each. Shipping costs vary, beginning at \$16.43 and increasing based on order size.

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# SPRING INTO UPCOMING ITEMS & EVENTS!



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## Mark Your Calendars and Join Us!

### Budget & Finance Workshops

March 10 - Seward ... March 24 - West Point ... April 7 - Ogallala ... April 8 - Kearney\*

Both new and veteran school board members must have a fundamental understanding of school finance. Superintendents, business managers, and bookkeepers are required to have a deep and comprehensive understanding of finance because taxpayers and citizens are asking districts to provide more detailed information about their finances. This workshop features all aspects of school district finance. (\*Amplified Finance Workshop) - <https://members.nasbonline.org/events/budget-finance-workshops>



#### BUDGET & FINANCE WORKSHOPS

4:00 PM - Registration    4:30 PM - Workshop & Dinner    8:30 PM - Adjourn

1. Review and explanation of general fund receipts with emphasis on TEEOSA and other forms of state aid
2. Explanation of how to protect your district's financial future by building a five-year receipt and expense chart
3. Discussion of key limitations placed on school finance: Levy Limits, Budget Authority, Revenue Caps; Etc
4. How to build a capital replacement schedule
5. Importance of board members understanding their distinct finances and how to communicate it clearly
6. Pitfalls and potential for fraud, credit cards, handling of cash, examination of payroll data
7. Understanding why budgeting is a continual process rather than a 'one and done'



#### AMPLIFIED FINANCE WORKSHOP - APRIL 8

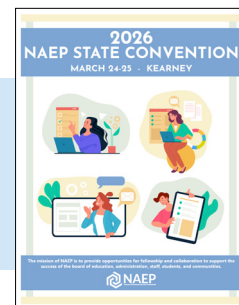
10:00 AM - Registration    10:30 AM - Workshop & Lunch    4:30 PM - Adjourn

1. Review of all funds and their purpose, and a step-by-step guidance on the timing and process for accurately preparing the budget
2. Steps to fully build a line item budget with special emphasis on payroll data and staffing costs
3. How to develop a five-year financial plan for the district for both receipts and expenses
4. Best practices for building and maintaining a capital replacement schedule that avoids unexpected costs
5. Why and how to prepare a compatibility report for receipts and expenses
6. Common pitfalls and fraud risks districts face and how to prevent them
7. A practical overview of Joint Public Hearing(s) and compliance expectations
8. Discuss different scenarios and the impact LB 243 and the 3% base growth limitation
9. A clear explanation of the process, requirements, and considerations for pursuing a tax limit override

### NAEP State Convention

March 24-25 - Kearney

The annual NAEP State Convention offers opportunities for district and ESU bookkeepers, business managers, secretaries, administrative assistants, and other office staff to engage in presentations and conversations on a variety of topics. <https://members.nasbonline.org/events/naep-state-convention>



### Nebraska Reception at the NSBA Conference

April 11 (Saturday) - San Antonio, TX

Join NASB and fellow attendees from Nebraska in San Antonio for the Nebraska Reception, Saturday afternoon, during the NSBA National Conference. For more information or to RSVP email Sharon. Conference attendees and their guests are welcome to attend. Sponsored by D.A. Davidson & Co.

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2,000,000 Nebraskans

329,000 Students

1,700 Locally Elected School Board Members

260 Member Districts/ESUs

ONE NEBRASKA



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Managing Director,  
Public Finance  
402-392-7986  
pgrieger@dadco.com



Cody Wickham  
Senior Vice President,  
Public Finance  
402-392-7989  
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Andy Forney  
Senior Vice President,  
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**2026 Gold Level Affiliates** - BD Construction, Inc./Kearney - Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska - Carlson West Povondra Architects - Chief Construction - Cornhusker International - Darland - DLR Group - JEO Consulting Group, Inc. - Johnson Controls - Lunchtime Solutions - MCL Construction - Navitas - One Source - A Verified Credentials Company and Certified Contractors - Outdoor Recreation Products

**2026 Silver Level Affiliates** - Creative Sites, LLC - UNO Innovative Learning-Centric Initiatives

**2026 Bronze Level Affiliates** - Ameritas Investment Company, LLC - Community Building Solutions - Cunningham Recreation - Fisher Tracks, Inc. - James D. Watts & Associates, PC - Mueller Robak Schaefer Hruza & Hassebrook - National Insurance Services - Nebraska Safety Center - Opaa! Food Management of Nebraska - Trane U.S. Inc. - Twotrees Technologies, LLC

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## CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

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**Chief Construction**  
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**Hausmann Construction**  
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## CONSTRUCTION SERVICES (CONT)

**MCL Construction**  
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**Sampson Construction**  
 PLATINUM LEVEL AFFILIATE



## ENERGY SERVICES

**Community Building Solutions**

**Facility Advocates**  
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**Johnson Controls, Inc.**  
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**Trane U.S. Inc.**

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**Nebraska Liquid Asset Fund**  
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**Northland**  
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**Piper Sandler**  
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**Opaa! Food Management**

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**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska**  
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**Cunningham Recreation/GameTime**

**Fisher Tracks, Inc.**

**Outdoor Recreation Products**  
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NRCSA Monthly Report



# Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association

*Member Update*

*February 5, 2026*



*Photo Credit: Ponca Public Schools*



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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 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 Executive Committee**

June 2026

Time & location TBD

## *NRCSA Search Service*



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



**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**



**Superior Public Schools**  
**[Announcement of Vacancy](#)**  
**[Apply for this Vacancy](#)**  
Application Deadline: **Feb. 18, 2026**  
Finalists Selected: **Feb. 22, 2026**  
Interviews: **Mar. 2, 2026**  
Contract Starts: **July 1, 2026**



**Hayes Center Public Schools**  
Search Complete



**Newman Grove Public Schools**  
Application Process Complete  
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**

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## ***NRCSA Updates***

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### **Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association Names Paul Sheffield as Executive Director-Elect**



The Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA) Executive Committee met January 29–30, 2026, to interview candidates for the organization’s open Executive Director position. Four highly qualified individuals were selected for interviews: Dr. Curtis Cogswell, Paul Sheffield, Dr. Jon Cerny, and Stephen Grizzle. Each candidate demonstrated strong leadership experience and a deep commitment to serving Nebraska’s rural schools.

After thoughtful deliberation, the Executive Committee extended an offer for the position of Executive Director-Elect to Paul Sheffield on January 31. Sheffield accepted the offer and will begin a transition period alongside current Executive Director Jack Moles to ensure continuity and a smooth leadership handoff for the Association.

“The Executive Committee was thrilled to have applications from four highly respected rural educational leaders in Nebraska,” said NRCSA President Chris Kuncl. “The process was both rewarding and challenging. One thing that was evident is that Nebraska rural schools have tremendous educational leaders. NRCSA rural schools are in good hands. We are thankful for the leadership of our current Executive Director, Jack Moles, and we look forward to growing NRCSA in the future under the leadership of Paul Sheffield.”

The search process was led by the NRCSA Executive Committee, which consists of President Chris Kuncl, Past President Heather Nebesniak, President-Elect Stephanie Kaczor, Secretary Jeremy Braden, Northwest Representative Ginger Meyer, Southwest Representative Jane Davis, North Central Representative Dale Hafer, South Central Representative Jon Davis, Northeast Representative Daryl Schrunck, and Southeast Representative Andrew Havelka.

#### **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 Schrunck, 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

About Paul Sheffield

Sheffield brings more than 30 years of educational leadership experience to the role, along with a longstanding commitment to rural schools and the NRCSA mission. He previously served on the NRCSA Executive Board as the Southeast Representative for six years, completing two terms and actively supporting advocacy efforts on behalf of rural districts across the state.

Originally from Russell, Minnesota, Sheffield is a graduate of Russell–Tyler High School. He began his postsecondary education at South Dakota State University before earning a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics Education from the University of Nebraska–Omaha in 1991.

He began his career in education in 1992 as a math, health, and physical education teacher and coach at Keya Paha County High School in Springview, Nebraska. He later earned a Master’s degree in Educational Administration from South Dakota State University and held multiple leadership roles at Shickley Public Schools, including principal, activities director, technology director, and superintendent. He earned an Educational Specialist degree from the University of Nebraska–Kearney in 2005.

In 2008, Sheffield became superintendent at Exeter–Milligan Public Schools, where he served until his retirement in 2025. Throughout his administrative career, he focused on student-centered decision-making, staff support, community engagement, and strong fiscal and organizational stewardship.

Sheffield and his wife, Karla, have been married since 1988 and have three children serving their communities in the military, agriculture, and healthcare professions.

NRCSA looks forward to Sheffield’s leadership and continued advocacy on behalf of rural community schools across Nebraska.

---

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Led by **FullScale** **All4Ed**

**Rural AI Program website**

## **From Blue Cross Blue Shield**

Nominations are open for 2026 Touchdown for Teachers!

Below is the flier for this year's program. The flier includes a QR code that take you directly to the nomination page- making it quick and easy for anyone to submit a teacher they'd like to recognize.

If you would be so kind, please post or share the flier within your school and throughout your community-bulletin boards around town, staff lounges, newsletters, social media pagers, or anywhere it might help spread the word. Let's get nominations coming in to honor our deserving teachers!

Nominations will be accepted through February 2026.

Thank you for helping us recognize the amazing work teachers do every day!

## **Touchdown for Teachers Nomination**



**The Nebraska Unicameral started the 2026 session on Wednesday, Jan. 7.** Bill hearings are scheduled through Friday, Feb. 27, at which point they will move into full-day floor debate.

NRCSA's Legislative Committee holds weekly Zoom meetings on Thursdays 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 Thursday for the remainder of the session.

A new feature for NRCSA members is that we are going to put out a short weekly update on what is going on legislatively. The plan is to put this out on Friday each week. All contacts who have been shared with us from NRCSA-member entities will receive the Legislative Update. If you do not receive this please contact us.

---

**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. 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. The tentative line-up of speakers includes:

- 8:30 a.m. Governor Jim Pillen
- 9:00 a.m. Senator Jana Hughes
- 9:30 a.m. Senator Brad von Gillern
- 10:00 a.m. TBD
- 10:30 a.m. Senator Dave Murman
- 11:00 a.m. Senator Wendy DeBoer
- 11:30 a.m. TBD

Information on registration can be accessed here:

[Register for the 2026 NRCSA Legislative Forum](#)

[Book a room at the Cornhusker Hotel](#)

*Note: If the block of rooms is full you may still be able to secure the government rate by telling the hotel you are there on behalf of your school district.*

---

**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.

---

**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. We have one nomination at

this point.

**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. We have one nomination at this point.

**SCHOLARSHIP AND RECOGNITION COMMITTEE MEMBER:** The committee will be moving from two year to three year terms. To make this work we will 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.

---

**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.
- One 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.

---

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](#)**

---

**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



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



*THETFORD 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. **Scholarship applications are due on Friday, February 6.**

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. **Nominations are due on Friday, February 6.**

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

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## **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, Potter-Dix, Sandy Creek Boards of Education identify their next Superintendent. We are currently assisting the Superior 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, 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@nrca.net](mailto:jmoles@nrca.net) or by phone at 402-335-7732.

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

[\*\*NRCSA Search Service Brochure\*\*](#)

[\*\*NRCSA Planning Support Brochure\*\*](#)

**Board of Education meeting visits.** Beginning in December, 2019, I started attending Board of Education meetings in member school districts/ESUs. Since then, I have attended 145 such meetings. I most recently attended the Board meetings at Brady and Eustis-Farnam on Monday, Jan. 12.

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

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12:** Lewiston

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.



*EUSTIS-FARNAM BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION*



*BRADY BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ADMINISTRATION*

**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.

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

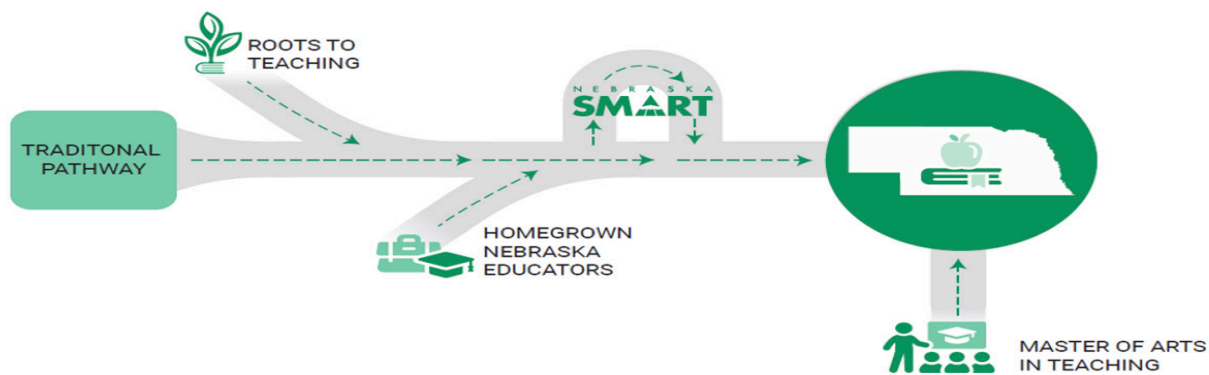
### [Nebraska Pre-School Programs](#)

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!

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### [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 Proski, 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 Superintendentcy. 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](#)

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

# 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.** - Jim Pillen; Governor of Nebraska

**9:00 A.M.** - Senator Jana Hughes, Dist 24;  
Education Committee Vice-Chair

**9:30 A.M.** - Senator R. Brad Von Gillern, Dist 4;  
Revenue Committee Chair

**10:00 A.M.** – TBD

**10:30 A.M.** – Senator Dave Murman, Dist 38;  
Education Committee Chair

**11:00 A.M.** - Senator Wendy DeBoer, Dist 10;  
Judiciary Committee Vice-Chair

**11:30 A.M.** – TBD

**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



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

**February 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 recently were:**

- January 14: Mike Mayer of Perkins County.
- January 28-: Landon Mackey of Madison.



**\* Luke Eisenmann, a sophomore at Leigh, won Nebraska VFW's Voice of Democracy Contest. For winning the state competition, Luke won \$2,000 and an all-expense paid trip to Washington DC where he will be representing the state of Nebraska at nationals! The State Runner-up was Ben Ruyle of Freeman**

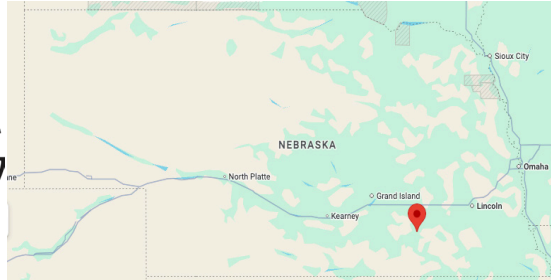


**\*The Academic Decathlon teams from Adams Central, Cambridge, Johnson County Central, and Ravenna qualified for the State Championships that will be held at UNO on February 20 and 21.**

**\*Karen Keller of Valentine has been named the VFW Nebraska Middle School Teacher of the Year.**

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## *Fillmore Central Public Schools*



**Mascot:** Panthers

**Enrollment:** 610 students

**Location(s):** Elementary School and High School in Geneva, Middle School in Fairmont

**Interesting Fact:** We have an alum that is an Olympian and has competed in the past three Olympics. Maggie Malone graduated from Fillmore Central in 2012 and is a javelin thrower that set the national record in 2021 and was the 2016 collegiate record holder and NCAA National Champion. She competed in the 2016 games in Rio de Janeiro, the 2021 games in Tokyo, and the 2024 games in Paris. Maggie has come back and presented to our students on several occasions.

Superintendent: **Josh Cumpston**

Principal(s): **Aaron Veleba** – Elementary Principal; **Lisa Lamb** – Middle School Principal; **Ryun Theobald** - High School Principal

Board of Education: **Chad Engle** – President; **Shaun Farmer** – Vice President; **Christin Lovegrove** – Secretary; **Nate Girmus**; **Whitney Peppard**; **Adam Wallin**

**Programs:**

Bond Issue:

Our Community recently passed a \$48.8 million school bond issue and then had an additional \$8 million anonymous donation to build a theater as part of our larger project. The bond will allow for a new middle school to be added to the high school in Geneva, build a new music room and band room, a large commons entry into a new competition gym, locker rooms, and a new theater. The high school will be completely renovated and the infrastructure updated, and the elementary will have the front entrance and office area changed for safety and security.

School Community Partnerships:

We have tremendous partnerships between the community and our school to help provide learning and mentoring opportunities. We work with our local hospital for job shadowing and other local businesses for work-based learning. The Geneva Arts Council helps us to provide opportunities in the Fine Arts for our students. Our construction classes have done projects for the school and for the community. We also have a very strong Teammates Chapter and our high school students do a lot of mentoring of our elementary students through Panther Cubs and Elementary Mentors.



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## *Johnson County Central Public Schools*



**Mascot:** Thunderbirds

**Enrollment:** 473 students

**Location(s):** Cook & Tecumseh, NE

**Interesting Fact:** The school song was written and composed for Johnson County Central by Tecumseh 1998 graduates, Nathan Morrissey and Daniel (Kettlehake) Christian.

**Superintendent: Jon Rother**



**Principals:** Justin Damme, High School Principal; Marsha Bacon, (4-5) Middle School Principal; Beckie Robeson, (PK-3) Elementary Principal; Laura Rademacher, SPED Director; Garrett Collin, Activities Director

**Board of Education:** Kim Wellensiekm, President; Dan Jones, Vice President; Gail Hutt, Treasurer; Justin Beethe; Jon Schmid; Sarah Weber

**Programs:**

JCC STRIV - Mr. Marcus Scheer. JCC's broadcasting team has become renowned for their quality and professional level live streaming of school activities. Last year, they were named the state's number one STRIV team. Apart from broadcasting home events such as volleyball, football, basketball, wrestling and track, the team partners with the MUDECAS Conference, the ECNC Conference and NSAA to live-stream conference and state level events. All of this is due to Mr. Scheer's high level of attention to detail, the coaching he does with students and in-depth knowledge of technology and media. The students commit many hours and late nights in preparation for broadcasting and the tear down of equipment post events.



JCC FFA Program - JCC's Future Farmers of America, led by Mrs. Christy Hodges and Mr. Connor Bartels, is a 13-time recipient of the NIFA Governor's Excellence Award.



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Twin River Public Schools



**Mascot:** Titans

**Enrollment:** 406 students

**Location(s):** Main school is in Genoa, NE but we also still have the Silver Creek School and utilize the Monroe community owned Gym

**Interesting Fact:** I do think several know this but we are currently in year 2 of a 3-year renovation and addition project to be completed the summer of 2027. Next school year, we will be in a new addition that includes a new gym, wrestling room, weight room, music classrooms, CTE spaces, offices, cafeteria, and classrooms! Our 1929 building will be demolished in May after school gets out and they will begin building more elementary classrooms over that spot with a new playground in the back. Our existing “elementary wing” will also have renovations this summer. We are very excited to see what the new spaces will provide for our students at Twin River!



**Superintendent:** Brandi Bartels

**Principal(s):** Brenda Buhl, Elementary Principal; Andy Banahan, 7-12 Principal; Logan Douglas, Assistant Principal/AD

**Board of Education:**

**Jennifer Swantek**, President; **John Nelson**, Vice President; **Alex Cornwell**, Secretary; **John Reeg**, Treasurer; **Chelsa Thompson**; **Jeremy Vetick**



## Programs:

### Speech Program

Twin River Public School's speech program, coached by Mr. Jonathan Anderson, Mr. Sam Robb, and Mr. Ryan Sidwell, has built an impressive résumé among rural speech programs in Nebraska over the past several years. Competing with a roster of around 30 students annually, the team won back-to-back East Husker Conference Championships in 2023 and 2024, followed by a Crossroads Conference Championship in 2025 after the school's conference realignment. In Nebraska School Activities Association district competition, Twin River claimed championships three years running: 2022, 2023, and 2024. At the state level, the program finished as the NSAA C2 State Runners-Up in both 2022 and 2024, and earned a third-place finish in 2023, demonstrating a consistency at the highest level that few small schools can match. Recognizing that long-term success starts early, the coaches developed a Junior High Speech program for students in grades 6 through 8. This program gives young competitors the chance to build foundational skills in public speaking, critical thinking, and confidence before they ever step onto the varsity stage. In a rural school community where every student counts, investing in a middle school program shows that the success enjoyed by the varsity team isn't just a product of talent, but of a system designed to develop it from the ground up.



### SHIP

Twin River School and Home in Partnership (SHIP) is a group of parent and teacher volunteers who work together to provide opportunities to make connections between school and home. SHIP's most recent events had over 100 people! At an Ornament Making Night, families enjoyed hot cocoa, cookies, and crafts. Book Bingo featured a free meal, bingo, and each student got to take home two free books! Over summer break, SHIP hosts "Popsicles in the Park" at all three towns that make up our school. Students were able to come to the park and see some friends and teachers that they haven't seen in months! SHIP hosted their first Color Run last summer. It was a messy, fun, unforgettable experience! SHIP also extends appreciation to all staff several times a year with random treat carts, a coffee truck during teacher appreciation week, and snacks during parent teacher conferences. This includes everyone that supports students....bus drivers, janitors, cooks, etc! The last two years, SHIP has purchased shirts for every student to wear on Field Day. Each class has a specific color so teachers can easily group students and parents can easily find their children! SHIP is a perfect example of how important it is for teachers and parents to work together to see success at both school and home!



# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## *Educational Service Unit 15*



**Locations:** Trenton and Mc Cook NE

**Interesting Fact:** ESU 15 covers an area larger than the state of Connecticut

**Administrator: Phillip Picquet**

**Board of Education: Kate Repass, President; Allison Sandman, Vice President; Mary Dueland, Treasurer/Secretary; Jesse Stevens; Jason Loop; Michael Harris; Nathan Behlke; Jon Lechtenberg; Marty Conroy; & Michael Fisher**

### Literacy and Instruction Initiative

ESU 15 launched an innovative regional literacy coaching program in direct response to the Nebraska Commissioner of Education's literacy initiative, spearheaded by Regional Literacy Coach Angie Dickey with support from staff developers Nicole Long and Sara Calvert. The program recognizes that sustainable change requires starting at the top—equipping administrators and lead teachers with instructional coaching skills before literacy interventions reach the classroom. Rather than pulling the best teachers out of classrooms, ESU 15 trains school leaders first, helping them shift from evaluators to instructional coaches. Through a partnership with Dr. Mary Webb from the Instructional Coaching Group, administrators across the ESU 15 region are participating in intensive workshops based on Jim Knight's proven 20-year coaching model—the same research-backed framework used by the Florida Center for Reading Research.

The first session took place this fall at McCook Community College, bringing together superintendents and principals for highly interactive professional development, where they learned the “go slow to go fast” philosophy and received manageable strategies to implement. Now, our ESU 15 team actively supports districts as partners throughout the journey, providing expertise as administrators work to understand data, support effective delivery, and put the right instructional leaders in place. This systemic approach is already transforming literacy instruction across the region by empowering administrators and teachers to drive sustainable classroom change with genuine teacher buy-in. Throughout the year, work has continued to implement LETRS and the Science of Reading. We are excited to host our five-day conference, June 8-12, with Jim Knight and ICG, which will further build competencies and capacity in instruction and literacy for both teachers and administrators.

### Title I C Migrant Program

The Migrant Title IC program, operating out of ESU 15, serves 302 students across 15 counties, covering 13,857 square miles—this is approximately 18% of Nebraska! The program is led by Title IC Migrant Director Sara Calvert and continues to grow and expand its reach to serve students across the region. The team is staffed by five members totaling 2.95 FTE: Sara Calvert (Director, .75 FTE), Esmirna Lopez (Service Provider, 1.0 FTE), Jean Isom (Recruiter, 1.0 FTE), Justen Lusk (Service Provider, 1.0 FTE), and Kim Pearson (Data Specialist, .20 FTE). The mission of the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is to help migratory children ages 3 through 21 meet high academic challenges by overcoming obstacles created by frequent moves, educational disruption, cultural and language differences, and health-related problems, ensuring that all migrant students graduate with a high school diploma or HSED that prepares them for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment. This service is greatly impacting students, especially in rural areas and communities across the region.

The program's key goals include increasing school readiness and graduation rates, providing instructional support in English Language Arts and mathematics, serving Out of School Youth, and offering non-instructional support services such as health, dental care, food, clothing, and life skills development. Students receive categorical eligibility for free school meals, instructional support both in school and at home, advocacy services, and access to Family and Community Engagement programs that support family literacy, including the Prime Time Nebraska for Humanities Grant and local and state Parent Advisory Councils. The program collaborates with ESU providers including Speech-Language Pathologists and Psychologists, and the Director also serves as the ELL Coordinator. As the program continues to grow and serve more families throughout the region, federal funds are allocated to State Educational Agencies through a formula based on each state's per pupil expenditure and counts of eligible migratory children residing within the state.

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## Updates from Members & Other Entities

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**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

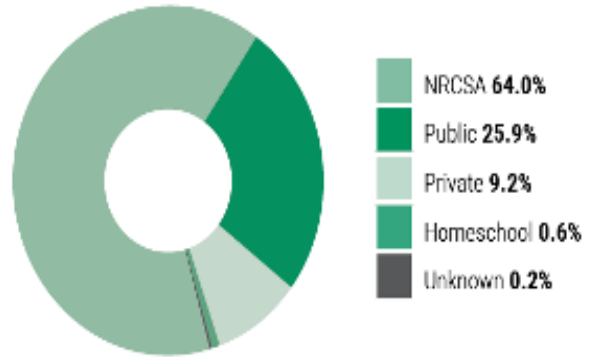
<p><b>TUTORING HOURS</b> </p> <p><b>Monday - Thursday</b> <b>3:30 to 8:30 PM CT</b></p>	<p>Tutoring sessions are available after school, in the evenings, and on weekends, giving students the flexibility to get help when it works best for them. Each session is customized to meet the student's needs, whether they're catching up, preparing for a test, or seeking to strengthen key skills.</p> <p><b>Tutoring for Spring Semester:</b> <b>Jan. 12 – May 7</b></p>
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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 **2,365** tutoring sessions, serving **945** 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.

## 945 STUDENTS SERVED

Since February 2024, 945 students have registered for free online tutoring with Nebraska SMART. The chart shows the distribution of students registered based on school type.

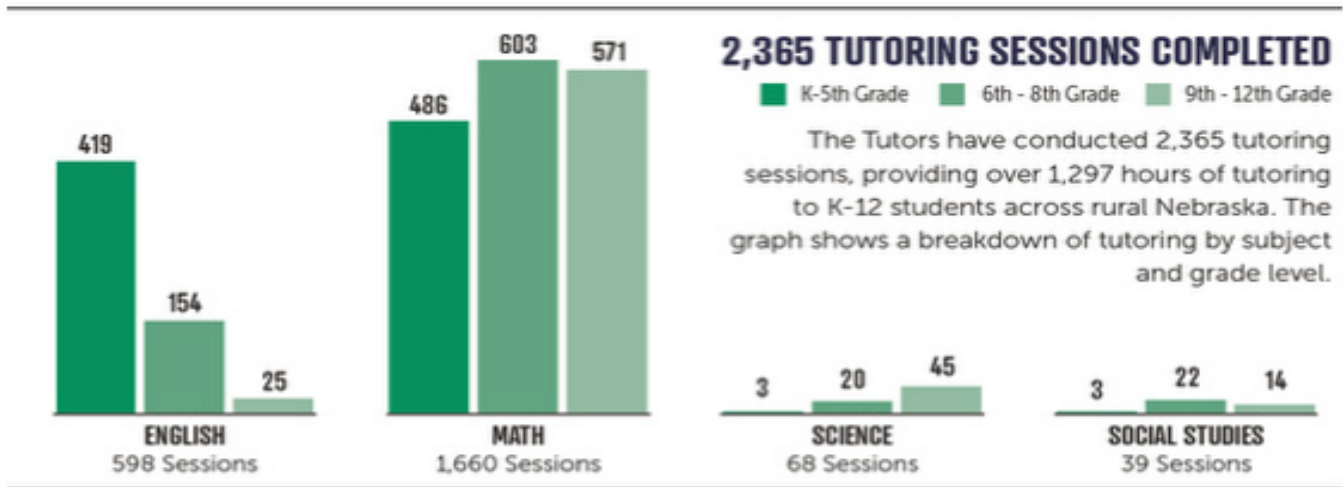


## How to Access Tutoring

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.



To learn more or help your students get started, visit [www.nscs.edu/nebraskasmart](http://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](#)

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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 onboarding new Board of Education members.** Many of our districts will bring on new Board members in January. Jeremy’s instrument could be a nice template for Superintendents and Board Presidents to use in working with new Board members. It may be accessed here:

### [Board Member Onboarding](#)

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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 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](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 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

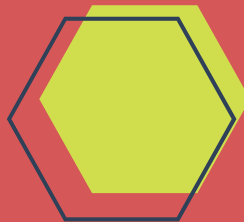


## Before the Season

What do Athletes/Kids Really Want?

Releasing Your Son/Daughter to the Experience

Parental Red Flags

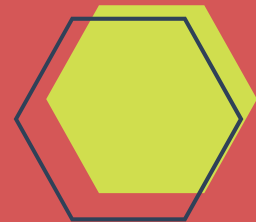


## During the Game/Event

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

### 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.



**BOLD:** Bridging Organization, Learning and Design

**Marilyn Dennison**

Education is in my blood. A life-long learner myself, my career has been spent in and around schools, students, educators, and administrators as both an educator and school administrator. Research has been a staple of my career to illuminate the needs of students and how environments affect learning.

Equipping learners with the skills and capacities for a successful future – including self-directed learning, global awareness, collaboration, and creativity – is no small matter. Many educational leaders are finding that traditional forms of education are not keeping students engaged; assisting students in taking responsibility for their own learning, or providing opportunities for students to work together. Pedagogies must evolve and respond to the changing world in order to remain relevant to the next generation of learners. Many schools are working on transforming their spaces, but often focus on influencing only one aspect of education either academic standards, instructional practices, or the physical environment, but seldom all three. This can prohibit reform efforts, and produce less than desirable results. This is where the next stage in my career has taken me. I lead the BOLD initiative within DLR Group to bring my passion and knowledge to help bridge the gap between education and design.

**What is BOLD?**

BOLD (Bridging Organization, Learning and Design) is a robust consultation process grounded in decades of successful change efforts. Our role is to help schools holistically respond to changes in the world that impact the overall learning experience for every learner. Our systems-based approach addresses teaching and learning while leveraging collaborative learning environments to increase confidence and engagement of educators and learners.

**What does the BOLD process look like?**

The BOLD process is designed to lead you through a series of explorations that discover, imagine, define, develop, and achieve the path to your desired outcomes. Within this framework, BOLD’s specific services are custom-selected to meet the unique needs of your district or school. These might include strategic planning, process consulting, spatial affordance training, change leadership coaching, culture development, inquiry based learning implementation, teaching and learning consulting services, or others.

**To learn more about DLR Group’s services and the BOLD research initiative please visit us at:**

<https://www.dlrgroup.com/sector/k-12-education/?ref=menulist>

<https://bold.dlrgroup.com/>





# Purple Ribbon Partners



**Apptegy**

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CORNHUSKER  
INTERNATIONAL  
TRUCKS

**Cornhusker International Trucks**

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**DA Davidson**

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**CMBA Architects**

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**Facility Advocates**

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# Purple Ribbon Partners



construction | the people you build with

## **MCL Construction**

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



## **Network For Educator Effectiveness (NEE)**

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



Roofing and Building Maintenance

## **Tremco Roofing**

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



## **Voss Lighting**

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



**WILKINS**

ARCHITECTURE | DESIGN | PLANNING

## **Wilkins Architecture, Design, Planning**

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jsertich@wilkinsadp.com

## Contact Information

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### **NRCSA**

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(402) 335-7732  
[jmoles@nrcea.net](mailto:jmoles@nrcea.net)

Jeff Bundy, Office Manager  
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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 Holderoft, Dist 36](#)

[Jana Hughes, Dist 24](#)

[Megan Hunt, Dist 8](#)

[Teresa Ibach, Dist 44](#)

[Mike Jacobson, Dist 42](#)

[Margo Juarez, Dist 5](#)

[Kathleen Kauth, Dist 31](#)

[Loren Lippincott, Dist 34](#)

[Dan Lonowski, Dist 33](#)

[Dan McKeon, Dist 41](#)

[Terrell McKinney, Dist 11](#)

[Glen Meyer, Dist 17](#)

[Mike Moser, Dist 22](#)

[Dave Murman, Dist 38](#)

[Jason Prokop, Dist 27](#)

[Dan Quick, Dist 35](#)

[Jane Raybould, Dist 28](#)

[Merv, Riepe, Dist 12](#)

[Victor Roundtree, Dist 3](#)

[Rita Sanders, Dist 45](#)

[Tony Sorrentino, Dist 39](#)

[Ashlei Spivey, Dist 13](#)

[Tonya Storer, Dist 43](#)

[Jared, Storm, Dist 23](#)

[Paul Strommen, Dist 47](#)

[Brad Von Gillern, Dist 4](#)

[Dave Wordekemper, Dist 15](#)

# Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association



*“Quality Rural Schools”*

[www.nrcsa.net](http://www.nrcsa.net)



## *NRCSA Programs*

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[Superintendent Search Service](#)

[USBank OneCard Program](#)



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



[www.nrcsa.net](http://www.nrcsa.net)



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



[www.facebook.com/nrcsahome/](https://www.facebook.com/nrcsahome/)

Update on Superintendent Goals  
Safety Report

New driveway lighting will be installed later this spring.

Facilities Report

Gravel is down in the south parking lot.  
Roof inspection has been completed.

Important Upcoming Dates

April 8 - Board Workshop  
April 15 - Board Meeting at 5:30 PM

Board Committee Reports

Curriculum & American Civics Committee (Burklund-chair, Lange, Matulka)

Facilities & Transportation Committee (Matulka-chair, Burklund, Lange)

Finance Committee (Burklund-chair, Heyen, Lange)

Negotiations Committee (Benes-chair, Heyen, Matulka)

Policy Committee (Benes-chair, Brase, Heyen)

**Qualifications for Appointment as Teacher**

To be eligible for appointment as a teacher, an applicant must have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree from an accredited or approved college or university and have a current teaching certificate, **license, or permit** from the State of Nebraska, Department of Education (or provide satisfactory evidence that these requirements will be in place prior to commencement of duties), and such other certification, license, or **permit** as may be required by law.

Legal Reference: Neb. Rev. Stat. § 79-801 et. seq.

Date of Adoption: April 20, 2009  
Reviewed with No Changes: October 11, 2023

**Qualifications for Appointment to Administrative and Supervisory Positions**

To be eligible for appointment to any administrative or supervisory position, an applicant must have a minimum of a Master's Degree from an accredited institution of higher learning with graduate training in educational supervision and administration from an accredited or approved college or university or have completed the coursework required for an **Alternative Pathway Permit**. Applicants must have a current Administrative and supervisory certificate or **permit** from the State of Nebraska, Department of Education (or provide satisfactory evidence that these requirements will be in place prior to commencement of duties), and such other certification or license as may be required by law.

Legal Reference: Neb. Rev. Stat. § 79-801 et. seq.

Date of Adoption: April 20, 2009

Reviewed with No Changes: October 11, 2023

Old Business

New Business

Discuss, Consider, and Take Necessary Action to Approve Certificated Staff

Hire(s)/Reassignment(s)/Resignation(s)

Motion by Matulka, second by Lange to approve new hires Rachel Mika-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, Sarah Millet-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, Cindy Klepper-HS Counselor, and Abby Pelster-PK & 6-12 Speech Pathologist; resignations from Ashlyn Lukasiewicz-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, Josh Karel-Spanish, and Michael Lucas-Elementary PE; and substitute teacher Samuel Carman. RCV 5-0. Motion carried.

Discuss, Consider, and Take Necessary Action to Approve Activities Director/Assistant Principal Contract for Thomas Brinkman

Motion by Matulka, second by Benes to approve Thomas Brinkman as Activities Director/Assistant Principal. RCV 5-0. Motion carried.

## **ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL / ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT**

**THIS CONTRACT** is made by and between the Board of Education of the Raymond Central Public School District No. 161, located in Lancaster County in the State of Nebraska, hereinafter referred to as "the Board", and **THOMAS BRINKMAN**, hereinafter referred to as "the Assistant Principal".

**WITNESSETH:** That in accordance with action taken at a Board of Education meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2026, the Board hereby agrees to employ the Assistant Principal, and the Assistant Principal hereby agrees to accept such employment as Assistant Principal/Activities Director of Raymond Central Public Schools, subject to the following terms and conditions:

**Section 1. Terms of Contract.** The Assistant Principal shall be employed for a period of eleven (11) months. The starting day will be July 20, 2026, and ending on June 18, 2027. Total available contract working days in June may be fulfilled during the months of June and July. A schedule of the working days must be submitted on or about June 1<sup>st</sup> of each contract year and approved by the Superintendent.

**Section 2. Salary.** In consideration of a 2026-2027 annual salary package of \$90,000.00 plus family health/single dental insurance or \$3,750.00 in lieu of health/dental insurance. The District will add to the gross pay, the amount of premium for a long-term disability insurance plan purchased by the administrator. The Assistant Principal agrees to perform faithfully administrative duties for the District as prescribed by the laws of the State of Nebraska and by the rules and regulations promulgated by the Board of Education. Said annual salary shall be paid in 12 equal installments in accordance with the policy of the Board governing payment of other professional staff employees of the District.

**Section 3. Leave.** Personal Leave, Sick Leave and Bereavement Leave will be granted and accumulated in the same manner as stated in the Raymond Central Public Schools Master Contract for Certified Instructional staff.

**Section 4. Professional Status.** The Assistant Principal hereby affirms that they are not under contract with another school board or Board of Education covering any part of or all of the same terms provided in this contract. The Assistant Principal further affirms that throughout the terms of this contract they will hold a valid and appropriate certificate to act as an Assistant Principal in the State of Nebraska, which certificate shall be registered in the Raymond Central Public Schools' Office of the Superintendent in Lancaster County as required by law.

**Section 5. Duties.** The duties of the Assistant Principal shall be as described in the Board of Education Policy 2225, which duties shall be performed in accordance with standards and goals, established by the Superintendent of Schools. The Assistant Principal agrees to devote his time, skill, labor and attention to his duties as Assistant Principal and Activities Director throughout the terms of this contract; provided, however, the Assistant Principal may undertake consultative work, speaking engagements, writing, lecturing, or other professional duties and obligations with approval of the Superintendent.

**Section 6. Discharge.** Throughout the terms of this contract, discharge of the Assistant Principal's contract shall occur only after mutual agreement of the parties.

**Section 7. Disability.** Should the Assistant Principal be unable to perform his duty by reason of illness, accident or other disability beyond their control, and such disability shall continue for more than their accumulated sick leave during any school year, the Board may in its discretion make a proportioned reduction from the salary stipulated herein. If such disability is permanent, irreparable, or of such a nature as to make performance of his duties impossible, the Board may in its discretion terminate this contract, whereupon the respective rights, duties and obligations of the parties hereunder shall terminate, with the exception of any benefits to be paid to the Assistant Principal under any insurance coverage furnished by the District.

**Section 8. Transportation.** The Board shall provide the Assistant Principal transportation required in the performance of his official duties or shall reimburse him for such transportation when personal vehicle is used at the NDE approved mileage rate.

**Section 9. Professional Development.** The Assistant Principal shall continue his professional development by attending appropriate professional meetings at the local, state and national levels with approval of the Superintendent. The expenses of such attendance shall be paid by the District. In addition, the District shall pay for membership to a professional organization mutually agreed upon by the Assistant Principal and Superintendent.

**Section 10. No Penalty for Release or Resignation.** There shall be no penalty for release or resignation by the Assistant Principal from this Contract; provided no resignation shall become effective until expiration of the contract unless accepted by the Board and the Board shall fix the time at which the resignation shall take effect.

**Section 11. Governing Laws.** The parties shall be governed by all applicable state and federal laws, rules and regulations in performance of his respective duty and obligations under this Contract.

**Section 12. Amendments to be in Writing.** This contract may be modified or amended only by a writing duly authorized and executed by the Superintendent and the Board.

**Section 13. Severability.** If any portion of this contract shall be declared invalid or unenforceable by a court of competent jurisdiction, such declaration shall not affect the validity or enforceability of the remaining provisions of this Contract.

The failure to return a signed copy of this Contract to the Superintendent or Secretary of the Board of Education of the District on or before April 15, 2026 shall constitute a rejection by the Assistant Principal of the offer of employment.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the parties have executed this contract on the dates indicated below.

Executed by the Administrator this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant Principal / Activities Director

Executed by the Board this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
President or Chairman, Board of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary, Board of Education

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

Discuss, Consider, and Approve the Addition of New Classes at Raymond Central High School

Motion by Benes, second by Brase to approve the addition of new classes at Raymond Central: Dual Credit Medical Terminology and Raymond Central Work Based Learning. RCV 5-0. Motion carried.

### Proposal for Dual Credit Medical Terminology 26/27

Basic Medical Terminology introduces students to the parts of anatomical terms, medical terms, and abbreviations as they pertain to the body and body systems as a whole. Comprehensive Medical Terminology establishes the foundational knowledge gained in Basic Medical Terminology and applies the knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, word roots, abbreviations, and symbols as they relate to the human body and body systems. This course emphasizes the understanding of medical terminology as it applies to anatomy, physiology, pathology, diagnostic procedures, and therapeutic procedures for the human body. These courses will be semester long and second semester Comprehensive Medical Terminology will build on the foundational knowledge gained from the Basic Medical Terminology course. We have several students who have taken these courses online, but offering these courses in person will allow for significant instructional advantages including guided practice, immediate feedback, structured discussion, and contextual learning through examples such as case studies, charts, and clinical scenarios. Offering this course in person promotes a deeper comprehension of the material and improved content retention while building strong application skills. This opportunity will expand academic opportunities for students and support career exploration in healthcare fields by allowing students to earn college credit while still in high school.

## **Raymond Central Work-Based Learning**

The Raymond Central Work-Based Learning course is designed to provide students with structured, supervised experiences that connect classroom learning to real-world career pathways. Through partnerships with local businesses and community organizations, students gain hands-on experience in professional settings aligned with their career interests.

This course emphasizes the development of essential employability skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, professionalism, time management, and ethical workplace behavior. Students set individualized learning goals, engage in meaningful job-related tasks, and reflect on their experiences to deepen their understanding of workplace expectations and career opportunities.

Work-Based Learning integrates academic instruction with practical application, helping students build technical skills, explore career options, and prepare for postsecondary education, training, or immediate entry into the workforce. Supervision, mentorship, and regular evaluation ensure that students make measurable progress while earning credit toward graduation.

By participating in this program, students graduate with valuable experience, stronger career readiness skills, and a clearer pathway toward future success.

Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve the Annual Audit

Motion by Lange, second by Brase to approve the annual audit for the year ending August 31, 2025 completed by Shaw, Hull & Navarrette Certified Public Accountants. RCV 5-0. Motion carried.



November 5, 2025

Nebraska Department of Education  
PO Box 94987  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987

RE: Lancaster County School District No. 161 (Raymond Central Public Schools)

During the performance of our audit fieldwork for the year ended August 31, 2025, we performed the following procedures regarding Lancaster County School District No. 161's student membership and attendance reporting and testing the District's allocation of expenses to the appropriate school district building level:

- 1) We documented the District's policies and procedures for collecting student membership and attendance data.
- 2) We determined that the District was following its policies and procedures for collecting student census data.
- 3) We determined attendance at the District is collected at least daily and calculated to the nearest hundredth of a day.
- 4) We determined the District maintains a cumulative attendance and membership record for each student.
- 5) We determined the cumulative attendance and membership records contain the date of enrollment, number of days or partial days in attendance and absent during each school year enrolled, and the date of withdrawal or graduation.
- 6) We traced student attendance reported in the Nebraska Department of Education's approved ADVISER data collection system to the District's student information system for the 2024-2025 school year. The ADVISER report had 139.37 fewer total days than the District's information system. The variance consisted of 150.50 fewer days present and 11.13 more days absent.
- 7) We sampled 26 students from the ADVISER report for the year ended August 31, 2025 and traced the days enrolled, present, and absent to the District's information system. No variances were noted on the students sampled. Total days enrolled matched on 26 of the students sampled.

- 8) Using the same sample of 26 students, we traced the students to their student enrollment files to verify that the student was documented as an enrolled student of the District for the dates claimed in the attendance record.
- 9) We sampled 26 General Fund disbursements, noting the District's allocation to the school district/building level. The District's allocation for 26 items sampled was appropriate.

If you need additional information, please call me at (402) 721-7662 or email me at [jonic@shncpa.com](mailto:jonic@shncpa.com)

Sincerely,

SHAW, HULL & NAVARRETTE  
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

*Joni M. Cantrall, CPA*  
Joni Cantrall, CPA

Discuss, Consider and Take Necessary Action to Approve the addition of a Boys and Girls Bowling Program.

Motion by Matulka, second by Brase to approve the addition of a boys and girls Bowling Program as a winter sport. RCV 5-0. Motion carried.

## **REASONS TO ADD BOYS/GIRLS BOWLING TO RAYMOND CENTRAL WINTER SPORTS OPTIONS**

- 1. There are 65 schools in Nebraska that offer Boys and Girls Bowling with a Class A & B. 30 of the 65 are class B or lower.**
- 2. 17 schools with lower student populations offer bowling.**
- 3. Low barrier to participate - Bowling is a sport that students with varying levels of athleticism and experience levels can participate in. Not all kids are built to play basketball or wrestle.**
- 4. A team consists of 5 bowlers. However, LSW last year due to a few injuries only had 3 and still competed since bowling is both a team and individual sport with both ways to qualify for state.**
- 5. Minimal equipment costs. The student athletes would supply their own balls and shoes.**
- 6. Bowling requires strategy, precision and patience- skills that translate well to academics. In fact, the student athletes on the unified team that do not currently participate in a winter sport here have some of the highest GPA's in the school.**
- 7. Bowling creates sportsmanship and teamwork. The nature of bowling in a BAKER format means teammates have to be a part of everyone's game - 5 players contribute to one game.**
- 8. Life-Long Sport. Bowling is great for everyone and forever.**
- 9. Research- Our own research here at Raymond shows that the more a student is involved in extra curricular activities the better their grades are and how much they support the school. Adding this sport would literally be adding students who might not participate in any other sport or group.**
- 10. I reached out to all the classes from this year's juniors to 7th graders and had a great response. One coach I reached out to said they added bowling without knowing if anyone would join and have seen growth. I think we would see that too.**

**I truly believe this would be a great add to Raymond Central. A lot of schools have one coach who coaches both the boys and girls teams. I love it here at Raymond, I already coach the Unified Bowling team and would absolutely love coaching the boys and girls bowling team.**

Discuss, Consider, and Take Necessary Action to Approve the process for selecting a design firm for a potential construction project.

Discussion was held regarding the process of selecting a design firm for a potential construction project. Mr. Hanson will interview firms. A Board Meeting will be held for top three firms to submit their proposals. The final firm will be selected by the Board.

#### Next Regular Board Meeting

The next regular Board of Education Meeting will be held Wednesday, April 15, 2026.

#### Adjournment

Motion by Brase, second by Benes to adjourn the meeting at 6:52 PM. RCV 5-0. Motion carried.