

SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR – RANDY NELSON



Nelson

Randy Nelson, Superintendent at Norfolk Public Schools has been named Nebraska's 2003 Superintendent of the Year. Nelson and 49 other superintendents will be recognized at the

American Association of School Administrators (AASA) national convention in February.

Randy has been the Superintendent at Norfolk since 1992. Prior to that, he served as Superintendent at Lexington Public Schools. He received his B.A. in Music K-12, M.A. and Ed.D. in Education

Administration from the University of Nebraska.

A few of Randy's community and professional activities include: Norfolk Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Nebraska State Board of Directors—Fellowship of Christian Athletes, participation and organizing of the Superintendent Leadership Institute, Assessment/Standards Training with the Nebraska Council for Excellence in

Education. Randy is the Past Chair of the Nebraska State Schoolmasters, the Nebraska Council for Excellence in Education and the Greater Nebraska Superintendents. In 1987 Randy was a State Representative for AASA Future Leaders of America.

Randy Nelson states; "My greatest reward in being a superintendent has been to see many of the teachers I have

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EDUCATION IS "SPECIAL"

by Bob Uhing, President NASES, Assistant Administrator ESU #1



Uhing

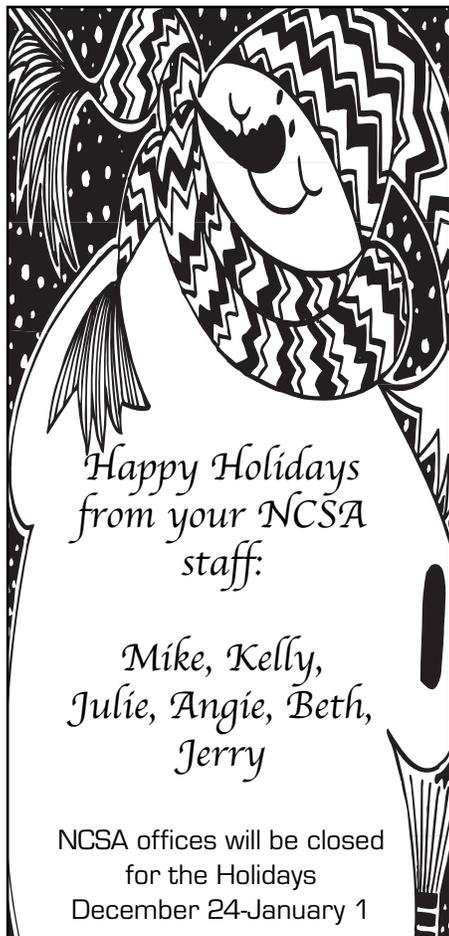
In October of 2001 President Bush established the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education. His rationale being that despite the large amounts of money spent

on special education programs, the programs too often fail to ensure that children with disabilities achieve. The report, *A New Era, Revitalizing Special Education for Children and their Families*, declared that there must be "accountability for results, flexibility, local solutions for local challenges, scientifically based programs and teaching methods, and full information and options for parents." The Commission recommended setting high expectations for students with disabilities and holding school districts accountable for results. It also recommended that states be required to annually report on each school and district's success in achieving the goals set for students with disabilities. Furthermore, it suggested empowering parents and reducing special education paperwork.

Often times, when we read the Federal recommendations, we attempt

to examine how they will impact our local schools and what changes we will need to implement at the local level. It is likely that the most significant impact of the report will come as a result of IDEA Reauthorization. As an ESU Assistant Administrator and Special Education Director, I work closely with 25 K-12 districts and observe first hand the impact quality special education programs has on students. Serving on the NCSA Executive Board has provided me the

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The mission of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA) is to be an effective leader for quality education and to enhance the professionalism of its members.



WHAT ARE BOARDS LOOKING FOR IN NEW SUPERINTENDENTS?

by Thomas Jacobson, Ph.D., Professor, University of Nebraska, Kearney

What do boards of education want their new superintendents to know, do, or be like? In 1991, Dr. Daniel McPherson and I began assisting boards of education hire superintendents. From our very first search we used a consensus decision-making model called Nominal Group Technique to help boards of education determine their top selection criteria. We asked each board member to list all of the skills, qualities, and characteristics they would like their new superintendent to possess. We worked with the board to narrow the list to the five most important criteria they wanted to focus on when hiring a superintendent. Eleven years and 135 searches later we have a database of over 675 selection criteria. Following is a compilation of that data.

A review of the selection criteria reveals eleven dominant themes. They are: leadership skills, personal character; ability to communicate, knowledge and background in finance, legal issues, education, facilities, active involvement in the community, student centered, supervision of staff, and experience or advanced degrees.

Leadership Skills

The selection criteria that came under the heading of leadership skills included phrases like visionary, ability to motivate, ability to delegate, problem solver; conflict resolution skills, excellent interpersonal relationship skills, ability to set and attain goals, team builder, mentor, and mediator. Boards that have leadership skills as one of their selection cri-

teria are looking for someone to “take charge,” but not someone to take charge in a General Patton way. Two of the districts we worked with used the term “servant leadership.” They stated that they wanted someone to “take charge” but also remember they were public servants. Some of the school districts that listed leadership skills as their top priority stated them this way:

- Visionary leader who is a team player, able to motivate, delegate, build consensus, and empower others to lead.
- Have demonstrated leadership skills. Have the ability to use those leadership skills to motivate others and to create a positive climate in the school and community. Have the ability to make tough decisions and stick to them.

Personal Character

Under the heading of personal character the selection criteria included such phrases as integrity, honesty, trustworthy, high moral values, family values, role-model, common sense, excellent work ethic, approachable, open to all ideas, and sense of humor. In a time when our political and business leaders have made national headlines for lacking these characteristics, this area is becoming a higher concern for boards and communities. Some of the boards that listed personal character as their top priority stated them this way:

- Possess a high degree of integrity and honesty; has strong personal and professional ethics and demeanor.
- Demonstrates high level of professionalism exemplified by honesty, integrity, dependability, loyalty, and trustworthiness.

Finance

The selection criteria that came under the heading of finance included such phrases as knowledge of state finance system, experience in budgeting, long-range planning, ability to effectively allocate resources, ability to manage declining resources, grant writing, and innovative ways of seeking additional financial resources. Some of the districts that had finances as their top priority stated them this way:

- Having extensive knowledge of and experience with school finance and being skilled in financial planning and manage-

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NCSA EXECUTIVE BOARD - 2002-2003

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter or by its authors do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators.

P E R S P E C T I V E S

by Jerry Sellentin, Ph.D., Executive Director



Sellentin

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Nearly three out of four students assessed met or exceeded Nebraska Math Standards as reported by Nebraska Education Commissioner Doug Christensen at a news conference on November 25. The State Report Card and the State of the Schools Report shows Nebraska students are continuing to receive a "quality" education. It also shows Nebraska students outscored students across the country in mathematics and reading. School improvement and accountability is "raising the bar" in Nebraska. The report gives reason for celebration yet we have major work to accomplish. Next school year seven school districts in Nebraska will have a school population where the minority is the majority and another twenty districts are close behind. As we look at the diversity we have in Nebraska schools, the challenges of students coming from low-income families, learning English for the first time, and the mobility of students entering and staying in school indicates the need for different learning approaches. This was pointed out by Gene Cosby, Superintendent at Hastings, and is highlighted in the November issue of *NCSA TODAY* "Kids Don't Start At The Same Starting Line."

As we look at the "quality" of education accomplished in the classroom with the teacher and the student, support of administrators and local control give concerns when we consider the legislation called "Leave No Child Behind" which became effective January 8, 2002. The law dictates to states what procedures educators must take to assure that educational progress is being made and imposes consequences when expectations are not met. As I recall the principals of federalism; Congress' role in setting or controlling educational policy should be minimal. The Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) states "education is primarily, if not exclusively, a state responsibility. The legislation of "Leave No Child Behind" does move into the area of local control and will be a financial burden in many states and school districts. We need to keep raising the "bar" in school improvement for all students in Nebraska and we can do so with more attention at the local and state level.



In the spirit of the holidays I would like to share some golf humor:

Golfer: "I'd move heaven and earth to break 100 on this course."

Caddy: "Try heaven, you've already moved most of the earth."

Golfer: "Do you think my game is improving?"

Caddy: "Yes, sir, you miss the ball much closer now."

Golfer: "Do you think I can get there with a 5 iron?"

Caddy: "Eventually."

Golfer: "Do you think it's a sin to play on Sunday?"

Caddy: "The way you play, sir, it's a sin on any day."

Golfer: "That can't be my ball, it's too old."

Caddy: "It's been a long time since we teed off, sir." 



NEBRASKA SCHOOLMASTERS CLUB ESTABLISHES SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Nebraska Schoolmasters Club voted to establish a Scholarship program for aspiring administrators. Two \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded annually. One scholarship will be awarded to a candidate working towards a master's degree in educational administration that will qualify him/her to serve as a principal. A second scholarship shall be awarded to a candidate superintendent.

The application deadline is February 1, 2003. Winners will be notified by March 15, 2003. For application information, contact: Alan Katzberg, Scholarship Committee Chair, Nebraska Schoolmasters Club, 2101 Stone Creek Loop South, Lincoln, NE 68512.

E-mail: ak25622@alltel.net 

Mark Your Calendars – Administrators' Days 2003

July 30-August 1

Kearney Holiday Inn & Kearney Ramada Inn

**Speakers include: Dr. Mike Fullan, Dr. Bertice Berry,
Dr. Paul Houston and Dr. Gerry Tirozzi**



NDE EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATOR

by Marcia Corr, Administrator, Early Childhood, Nebraska Department of Education

Greetings to NCSA! My name is Marcia Corr, and I'm the new Early Childhood Administrator at the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). I appreciate the opportunity to introduce myself to administrators across the state and to express my sincere interest in working together to support learning for young children.

First, I want to recognize that the early childhood field has benefited immensely at the state and national level, and surely will continue to benefit, from the leadership of Harriet Egertson, who retired from NDE on July 31. Following her in this position is quite a challenge!

My commitment and tenure in early childhood span nearly thirty years. Prior to coming to the department as an early childhood consultant ten years ago, I taught child development and early childhood education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Previous experience included teaching and administration in early childhood programs. My certification is in elementary and early childhood education. Over the years, my life has been enriched greatly by my own family, as well as experiences and relationships with many children, families, university students, and colleagues.

The mission of the Early Childhood Team at NDE is to provide leadership, resources, and professional development to the early childhood field to achieve high quality programs for young children and their families. My responsibilities include oversight and assistance for early childhood professional development and program initiatives; implementation of Rule 11; promotion of partnerships across a variety of early childhood programs in homes, centers, schools, and ESUs; and development of resources to inform practices in programs serving children from birth through the primary grades. The Head Start State Collaboration Office and Even Start Program are also part of our team.

As school administrators, you recog-

nize the importance of what happens in the early years, from birth through kindergarten, as critical to success in school. Your attention to and involvement in early childhood has expanded in recent years. Through passage of LB759 and increased appropriation in 2001, the Nebraska Early Childhood Grant Program currently provides assistance for operating collaborative, inclusive prekindergarten programs in twenty-nine school districts in the state. Revisions to Rule 11 in 2002 provide regulations for all school- and ESU-operated prekindergarten programs. The number of school districts offering full-time kindergarten has increased from 13 (2%) in 1991-92 to 206 (37%) in 2001-02. School outreach and partnerships with families, community agencies, Head Start and other early childhood programs are becoming stronger in working together to support transition and success in school. I am eager to work with administrators and teachers in sharing ideas and addressing issues in these and other early childhood efforts across ages from birth through grade 3, and including before-and-after school programs.

Federal initiatives in No Child Left Behind and Reading First, as well as Good Start, Grow Smart and Early Reading First focus on assuring that all children have opportunities to learn to their potential. Now, more than ever, we are called upon to be intentional and articulate about why we do what we do in teaching young children. We recognize the need and opportunity to improve experiences for young children to support their language and literacy development. We must be sure that our knowledge and practices best support children's learning across all domains, that we don't lose sight of the uniqueness of young children and how their learning must be integrated to make it most meaningful. Parents, teachers, caregivers, and communities can together provide the experiences young children need to grow as eager learners and

responsible individuals through their school years and beyond.

Staff members in the NDE Office of Early Childhood Team are committed to being responsive to your questions and program needs. In addition, the Early Childhood Training Center, a statewide project of NDE housed at ESU 3, has a wide range of expertise and resource materials to support early childhood professional development. For more information about early childhood, contact our office at 402-471-3184, email me at mcorr@nde.state.ne.us, or visit www.nde.state.ne.us/ECH/ECH.html, our Web site. 

FYI

You can now download
the NCSA Today!



Please visit
www.ncsa.org



NASA AWARDS

Honor Awards

Marshall Adams, Seward Public Schools (Region I)
 Jerry Barrabas, Ft. Calhoun (Region II)
 Randy Nelson, Norfolk Public Schools (Region III)
 Dale DeRiese, Holdrege Public Schools (Region IV)

Longevity Awards

15-Year Award

Dale Adkinson, Gordon Elementary School
 Richard Alt, Scribner-Snyder Community Schools
 Gary Bolton, Fremont Public Schools
 Tom Carlstrom, Humphrey Public Schools
 Kent Halley, Mitchell Public Schools
 Fred Helmink, Fairbury Public Schools
 Tim Hoffman, Conestoga Public Schools
 Joyce Huffman, Sumner-Eddyville-Miller Schools
 Bill Kuester, Nebraska Unified #1
 Kyle McGowan, Crete Public Schools
 Dale Reber, Emerson-Hubbard Public Schools
 Larry Hermsmeyer, Atkinson West Holt Public Schools

20-Year Award

Marshall Adams, Seward Public Schools
 Wayne Bell, ESU #10
 Keith Fagot, Loomis Public Schools
 Dave Jones, Oakland-Craig Public School
 Ron Karr, ESU #11
 Bob Meyers, Raymond Central Schools
 John Post, Rock County High School
 George Robertson, Mead Public Schools
 Nate Stineman, Southern Valley School

Dennis Chipman, Medicine Valley Public
 Kirby Eltiste, Don Stroh Admin Cntr.
 Don Ferguson, Alma Public Schools
 Scott Maline, Minden Schools
 Bill Mowinkel, Northwest High School – Grand Island
 Randy Nelson, Norfolk Public Schools
 Randall Peck, ESU #8
 Larry Ramaekers, Aurora Public Schools
 Carol Renner, Kearney Public Schools
 Dallas Watkins, Dundy County Schools
 Jerry Barabas, Fort Calhoun Public Schools
 Marge Beatty, ESU #16
 Dan Ernst, Waverly Public Schools
 Craig Kautz, Hastings Public Schools
 Duane Tappe, ESU #15
 Dave Wade, Elwood High School
 Ken Navratil, Elkhorn Valley Public Schools

25-Year Award

Leroy Cundall, Baydard Public Schools
 Jim Flynn, Louisville Schools
 Tom Kunkel, Newman Grove Public Schools
 Don Pieper, Dorchester Public Schools
 Bill Rogers, Brady Public Schools
 Doug Nollette, O'Neill Public Schools
 Mike Ough, ESU #2

30-Year Award

Gary Oxley, Tri County Schools
 Harlan Schrieber, Logan View Schools
 Rod Garwood, ESU #1
 Jerry Williams, Kimball Public Schools

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING NAESP LONGEVITY AWARD WINNERS!

15-Year Award

Gale Hamilton – Fremont
 Dave Ludwig – Wisner-Pilger
 Stephen Morris – Grand Island

20-Year Award

Roger Nyffeler – Kearney
 Larry Wilbeck – Deschler
 Stu Wiley – York

25-Year Award

Bob Brandt – Norris
 Roger Gray – Lisco
 Don Gronemeyer – Hastings
 Rich Grandgenett – Tekamah – Herman
 Joe Micanek – Burwell
 Ron Pauls – Henderson



WHAT ARE BOARDS LOOKING FOR ...

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ment.

- Have a strong background and experience in educational finance. Ability to manage declining resources while keeping student needs as the number one priority.

Excellent Communication Skills

Communication skills selection criteria were pretty straightforward. Most of them listed listening skills first, followed by speaking and writing skills. The listening skills were often modified with terms like "listen to all points of view" and "listen with an open mind". Some of the districts that had communication skills as their top priority stated them this way:

- Possess excellent communication skills; be a good listener; have the ability to speak and write clearly. Have the ability to work effectively with all stakeholders, listening to all, while maintaining the focus of the district.

- Is an effective communicator both in oral and written expression and be a good listener.

Community Involvement

The concept of what constitutes community involvement is fairly diverse. It included such things as living in the community, being active in the community, being visible in the community, attending extracurricular events, being involved in community events, joining community organizations (e.g. civic organizations, service organizations, church, etc), and interacting with the business community. It also included items relative to the individual community such as accepting and working with a diverse population, understanding rural issues, or just understanding issues unique to the particular community. Districts that had community involvement as one of their top priorities stated them this way:

- Demonstrated appreciation and understanding of small town/rural culture and a desire to become actively involved in the community.

- Be willing to become a part of the community. Understand the role the schools have in the community.

- Possess a genuine desire to work in a multicultural community by demon-

strating a working knowledge of the richness of diversity.

Student Centered

The concept of being student centered took a number of different forms. It included kids as the first priority, student advocate, success for all students, improved student achievement, positive learning climate, and "no child left behind." Districts that had being student centered as one of their top priorities stated them this way:

- A strong advocate for student achievement. A person who understands their primary responsibility is assuring quality education for all students.

- An advocate for all kids, holding high expectations for student achievement and behavior; and assisting students to realize the value of education.

Education and Educational Trends

The selection criteria that came under the heading of education and educational trends included such phrases as: knowledge of curriculum and instruction, creating a climate for learning, use of technology, standards and assessment, school improvement, managing change. Some of the districts that had education as their top priority stated them this way:

- Have a sound understanding of educational trends and technology including the utilization of distance learning labs to send and receive curriculum offerings.

- A firm grounding in educational theory. A proven record of improving academic achievement. Someone who believes in being accountable to parents.

Legal Issues

Legal issues selection criteria included such phrases as knowledge of state laws, experience with the legislative process, interpretation of the effect of legislative actions, creating board policy consistent with legal issues, and lobbying. Some of the districts that had legal issues as their top priority stated them this way:

- Have a good working knowledge of the state's school law, legislative issues and their effect upon the district and have the ability to translate into sound educational policy.

- Evidence of skill in the political

process as a negotiator and lobbyist, with concern for special and regular education legal issues.

Previous Experience/Advanced Degree

This is a criterion that almost always comes up during the brainstorming session. All boards want some one who has a track record as a superintendent and many feel possessing a doctorate degree is necessary. Along with this, boards often state they want someone who is old enough to have gained wisdom but young enough to stay in the position for a while. We jokingly tell them that they are looking for someone 35 years old with a doctorate degree and 20 years of experience. Those boards that had experience and advanced degree as one of their top priorities phrased them this way:

- Have previous experience as a superintendent.

- Has experience and training. The board will only consider candidates with a doctorate. Experience as a superintendent is preferred.

Facilities

The selection criteria that came under the heading of facilities included such phrases as knowledge and background in maintaining quality facilities, experience with bond issues, long term facility planning, managing growth, and experience with school facility construction. Some of the districts that had finances as their top priority stated them this way:

- Be a good steward of the buildings and grounds of the district with knowledge of assessing needs for construction of additional facilities.

- Have experience in school facility construction.

Supervision of Staff

Supervision of staff focused primarily on teachers but also included administrative and non-certified personnel. It included phases such as evaluating performance, motivating staff to perform at their highest level, holding people accountable, staff development, creating a positive climate for growth, and rejuvenating mature staff. Districts that had supervision of staff as one of their top

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MARLIN SPELLMEYER NAMED NSASSP DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD WINNER



Spellmeyer

Marlin Spellmeyer, Principal at Ogallala Middle School has been selected for the Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals Distinguished Service Award.

The NSASSP Distinguished Service Award is to honor administrators who have rendered outstanding and unselfish service to the Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals and who have contributed significantly to quality education at the state and local level. Persons will have demonstrated their enthusiasm for the principalship by support from students, teachers, and peers.

Marlin Spellmeyer received his B.A. of Arts in Education from Kearney State College, and his Masters in Administration & Supervision from Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. Marlin began his career as a teacher at Ocean View School District in Huntington Beach California and became Principal in 1976. Marlin moved to Ogallala in 1979 where he held the position of Principal of Ogallala Jr. High and now Ogallala Middle School. Marlin

has had several accomplishments in his career including the First state elected Middle Level Representatives to serve on NSASSP Executive Council and Nebraska's first-ever Middle School Principal of the year in 2000-2001. Marlin directed the transition from a Jr. High School operation to a Middle Level operation in Ogallala between 1979 and 1984 and he initiated a School Advisory Committee Program in 1981.

Jim Jeffres, Elementary Principal at Ogallala Public Schools states; "My support for Marlin in his nomination for the NSASSP Distinguished Service award is not solely on the work he has done to bring the middle level concept to Ogallala, but for the selfless hours of dedication he has given over the past 18 years to bring the middle school concept into prominence in the state of Nebraska."

Pat Suing, Parent, Ogallala Public Schools says; "Marlin Spellmeyer is an effective leader who has been actively involved in promoting the betterment of education for both parents and staff. He is not afraid of challenges and is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve."

WANTED

•Crawford Public Schools will be accepting applications for the position of Superintendent of Schools for the 2003-04 school year. Crawford is a class 3 district with approximately 270 students. Located in the Pine Ridge area of the Nebraska panhandle, the school and area both have many attractions and opportunities candidates for this position will find rewarding. The successful candidate must hold proper certification from the State of Nebraska or be able to acquire it. Please send a letter of application and have credentials forwarded to: Office of Superintendent, Crawford Public Schools, 905 5th Street, Crawford, NE 69339.

NSASSP WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING COMPANIES/ INDIVIDUALS FOR HELPING SUPPORT OUR NATIONAL SPOUSES PROGRAM

**Rick Zeilinger
Coca Cola
Martin Photography
School Specialty**

RANDY NELSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR

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mentored throughout the years going on to become building principals as well as some of the principals I have encouraged go on to be superintendents ... I have a strong passion for the superintendency and will continue to encourage others to pursue this great profession."

Kenneth Bird, Superintendent of Westside Community Schools says: "Randy's commitment to quality education services is well documented in his

home community of Norfolk, as well as across the State of Nebraska. His enthusiasm for excellence, his passion for quality, and his vision for the future are consistently part of every educational endeavor in which I have been involved with Randy. He is always used his positive energy to advocate what is best for students, teachers, and administrators."

Mike Kneale, President & CEO of Education Research & Development

Institute Inc. states: " Randy Nelson is a person of very unique talent, who truly is passionate about serving young people and making sure that each young person is served in the most significant and meaningful way possible. He does it right because it is the right way to do it and that is the only way he knows how to do anything."



NSDLAF+ NOTES #6

I can remember when I was the superintendent in Grand Island a junior high math teacher was retained in the summer to help produce a study of state aid and specifically as state aid affected the Grand Island Public Schools. The report was completed in 1978 and the material pointed to some "dramatic" conclusions. First, not enough dollars were committed to the process of state support of education to ever allow the system to function beyond a basic foundation approach. Second, the assessed valuations among sub-divisions of government were so inconsistent that any use of valuation as a measure of a district's funding capacity was impractical and the cause of gross inequities throughout the state.



The various legislative activities that have occurred since those early days of state aid have ostensibly been designed to address previous problems. The argument that not enough of the state resources are committed to the process still lingers. The formula attempts to differentiate among districts on the basis of such items as demographics and relative wealth. Each year new or refined options have been proposed. Some have been adopted and

during each legislative session old ideas are rekindled and new concepts explored resulting in the usual battle of the print-outs.

The process of property assessment has definitely been the recipient of the entanglement between real and adjusted values as a part of state aid. To a degree controls that were not present earlier are now in place to direct local assessors to remain current and comparable with other jurisdictions. By the same token, artificially defined tier groupings based on district size have essentially given away to value-added demographic factors.

Since the state-aid-to-education evolution will always be with us, the burden on school districts to effectively manage will be daunting at best. The responsibility for financial planning carries with it the responsibility to communicate honestly and consistently with patrons, boards, and staff. 🗣️

Cliff Dale, Vice President
Ambac Securities, Inc.
(402) 483-1678 or
cdale@ambacsecurities.com

UPCOMING EVENTS...

JANUARY 13, 14, 16 STUDENT DISCIPLINE WORKSHOP

January 13 - Bridgeport
January 14 - Columbus
January 16 - Omaha
For more information contact
Angie: angie@ncsa.org

JANUARY 18, 25, FEBRUARY 8 EMERGING ADMINISTRATORS

For more information contact Kelly
kelly@ncsa.org

FEBRUARY 4-5 LABOR RELATIONS

February 4 - Pre-Conference
"Collective Bargaining"
1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
February 5 - Conference
8:00 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.
For more information contact
Angie
angie@ncsa.org

NASES/NDE JOINT MEETING FEBRUARY 13-14

Cornhusker Hotel - Lincoln
For more information contact
Angie: angie@ncsa.org

Please visit www.ncsa.org to register.

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

👉 **Grant Clark**, Superintendent, Coleridge Public Schools who announced his retirement effective July 1st

👉 **Larry Hermsmeyer**, Superintendent, West Holt Public Schools who announced his retirement effective July 1st

👉 **Don Wagner**, who has been named Interim Superintendent at Crawford Public Schools

👉 **Elkhorn, Gretna, North Bend, and Sutherland** on successfully passing school bonds

👉 **Suzanne Ratzlaff**, Heartland Community Schools who was named the

2003 Nebraska Teacher of the Year

👉 **Charlotte Griffith**, Lost Creek Elementary Columbus Public Schools; **Roger Groth**, Westside High School; **Robert Jenkins**, Westside Middle Schools; and **Bonnie G. Simpson**, Southern Valley Community Schools as Award of Excellence Winners in the 2003 Nebraska Teacher of the Year Program

👉 **Marge Harouff**, Administrator, Adult Program Services, Nebraska Department of Education, selected as a Distinguished Graduate of the University of Nebraska Kearney

👉 **Connie Knoche**, School Finance and Organization Services, Nebraska Department of Education, selected as Department of Education Employee of the Year

👉 **Keith Rohwer**, Superintendent of Nebraska City, on receiving the Walter K. Beggs Award

👉 **Kent Mann**, Principal at Grand Island Senior High School, on receiving the David W. Hutchenson Award

Note: Please send announcements of retirements, recognition or special occasions to jerry@ncsa.org to share with the NCSA family.



NEBRASKA EDUCATORS BELIEVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PARAPROFESSIONALS IN NEBRASKA NEED MORE TRAINING

by Dr. Enid Eschonewise, Papillion-La Vista South High School

One thousand fifty-six building administrators, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals in Nebraska believe significantly more training is needed than is currently being offered in all eleven topic areas surveyed in a questionnaire administered during the 1999-2000 school year. It is no surprise that the respondents felt that significantly more training is needed for paraprofessionals in special education programs. The study reveals a common understanding of the need for and potential benefit of paraprofessional training. Such consensus establishes an optimal environment for training and should increase the effectiveness of such training. The topic areas surveyed included: school policies, legal and ethical issues, job roles and responsibilities, knowledge of disabling conditions, behavior management, tutoring techniques, recording and reporting student behavior, instructional materials, equipment operations, first aid, and job-specific skills.

The Paraprofessional

The role of paraprofessionals as instructional assistants in American public schools is a relatively new concept, although paraprofessionals themselves have been in the schools for years performing clerical duties. As the paraprofessional roles were transforming, changing from clerical, record-keeping tasks, to participation in the instructional process, the number of paraprofessionals in schools was growing. In 1965, it was estimated that there were fewer than 10,000 paraprofessionals working in schools (Pickett, 1986). However, a survey of chief officers conducted in 1999 by the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals indicated that there were now more than 500,000 full-time equivalent paraprofessionals across the country (Pickett 1999). Pickett (1986) described paraprofessionals as "the fastest growing yet most under-recognized, under-prepared, and therefore under-utilized category of per-

sonnel in the service delivery system" (p.41).

Although most instructional paraprofessionals have had little academic training, many have an abundance of knowledge about their students because they interact and participate with them in the community. This interaction with students and their families enables the paraprofessionals to have a holistic and informed perspective that can be essential in assisting students both academically and socially (Pigford & Hale, 1995).

Research Methodology

This 1999-2000 study examined the current training practices and the perceived training needs of paraprofessionals who work in special education programs in Nebraska and assessed by building administrators, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals. The findings of the study were based on data collected from a questionnaire. Members of the Nebraska Association of Special Education Supervisors, willing to have their district participate in the study, distributed and collected the questionnaires. The response rate was 55 percent. The data indicates that sig-

nificantly more paraprofessional training is needed than is currently taking place in all of the 11 training topics presented in this study. In all 11 training areas, there was a significant need for more training than was currently being offered at the .01 levels. The combined group mean scores for perceived training needs ranged from 4.14 to 4.66, using a "5" point Likert scale. Table 1 presents the three groups' combined mean scores of their perceived need of training for each of the 11 topic areas surveyed. The training topic areas are listed in the order of perceived need.

Administrators' Perceptions on Paraprofessional Training

It is interesting to note that building administrators reported significantly more paraprofessional training in schools than did the special education teachers and paraprofessionals working directly in the programs. There could be many reasons for the discrepancy found regarding the amount of training occurring in schools. The discrepancy could be due to the separation between the building administrators and the classroom. Building administrators are often unable

to be in all classrooms daily due to their ongoing administrative tasks and, therefore, may not be as aware of day-to-day classroom activities. It may also be a result of the building administrator's ownership over the building

TABLE 1
TRAINING TOPIC AREAS IN ORDER OF PERCEIVED NEED:
AVERAGE OF ALL THREE GROUPS COMBINED.

NO.	TOPIC	M	SD
1.	Job Role Expectations	4.66	.65
2.	Behavior Management	4.55	.74
3.	First Aid/Safety	4.49	.77
4.	Knowledge of Disability Conditions	4.46	.76
5.	School Policies	4.45	.78
6.	Legal/Ethical Issues	4.45	.79
7.	Job Specific Skills	4.40	.83
8.	Tutoring Techniques	4.30	.87
9.	Recording and Reporting	4.26	.88
10.	Instructional Materials	4.16	.88
11.	Equipment Operations	4.14	.94

(continued on page 12)



KIM SAUM-MILLS NAMED NSASSP ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR



Saum-Mills

Kim Saum-Mills, Assistant Principal at Millard South High School, was recognized as the Assistant Principal of the Year at the annual Assistant Principals Conference November 18th at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln. McDonald's Corporation, National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals sponsor this award each year.

Kim Saum-Mills received her B.S, Masters of Education, and Ed.D from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She has been the Assistant Principal at Millard South High School since 1996. Prior to that, Kim taught English at Fremont High School.

Kim has been active at her school in the development and implementation of

a Wellness Program. She is an officer in NSASSP, and active in several community leadership activities such as; Westside Church Children's Ministry, Westside Church Prayer Typing and the American Cancer Society Benefit.

Jon Lopez, Principal at Millard South High School, states: "She is able to diagnose and anticipate the needs of students and staff and is able to draw on her strengths and the strengths of others in order to find initiatives to address issues in our school. She has initiated a number of successful programs that provide support for new staff, provide continuing professional development for experienced staff and supports students for whom school is difficult." Brad Burwell, President, Millard School Board, says: "I am constantly impressed by her communication skills, critical thinking ability, working with new staff and her creativeness in leadership programs."



KING NAMED AS NSASSP "FRIEND OF EDUCATION"



King

Long-time Nebraska Association of Secondary School Principals contributor and supporter Larry King was awarded the "Friend of Education" Award at the annual NSASSP conference in Kearney.

Larry has provided awards through his company Awards Unlimited over the past 20 years or more, and his creativity has been the guiding force in the design of nearly all of the Association awards. His contributions range from hosting hospitality hours for Region meetings, contributing to the Spouse Support program, providing hospitality for National Conferences, and generally supporting the work of principals throughout the state through his efforts to recognize school activities with meaningful awards. As a former High School Principal, Larry carries the knowledge of how schools work, which makes him a businessman who takes pride in showcasing the achievements of students, educators, and all those groups or individuals associated with schooling in Nebraska and the entire Midwest. Our congratulations go out to Larry King of Awards Unlimited, a true friend to Nebraska education!



LANA SIDES NAMED NSASSP OUTSTANDING NEW PRINCIPAL



Sides

Lana Sides, Principal at Sidney Middle School, has been selected for the Nebraska State Association of Secondary School Principals Outstanding New Principal Award.

The NSASSP Outstanding New Principal Award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in their school, their region, and at the state level. The individual will have demonstrated their enthusiasm for the principalship by support from students, parents, teachers, and peers.

Lana Sides received her B.S and M.S. in Elementary Education, her Elementary Administration Endorsement, and Specialists Degree for Superintendent of Schools and Secondary Administration Endorsement from Chadron State College. Lana was a teacher at Cedar

Canyon School District in Gering before taking on the position of Administrative Instructor at Valley Alternative Learning Transitioning School in Scottsbluff and becoming the Middle School Principal at Sidney Middle School.

Brent Jeffers, Principal at Sidney Public Schools states: "Mrs. Sides is a strong leader who has unique abilities to mobilize staff, students, parents, and the community to work together to achieve the school's goals.

Jane Holechek, Teacher at Sidney High School, says: "Lana is a very conscientious principal. She cares about the students under her charge as well as the teachers she leads. She is never too busy to offer advice or help solve a problem. She doesn't shy away from difficult situations, but gathers information to make fair and just decisions."



SYMPATHIES

The family of Dr. Walter Parks, past Superintendent of Juniata, Ord, Scottsbluff and Weeping Water, who died on November 13, 2002



EDUCATION IS "SPECIAL"

(continued from page 1)

opportunity to visit with administrators statewide and examine not only new and innovative educational programs available to students but to also listen to ways of improving services offered to students in our state. After reviewing the Commission's Report and reviewing data in *The Student/Parent Follow-Up Assessment Interview Study of Students with Disabilities* conducted by the Nebraska Transition Project, we found that Nebraska school districts are ahead of their counterparts in many of the areas mentioned in the Report. As an example, 92 percent of all students with disabilities who exited Nebraska schools from 1996-1999 have been employed at some time. Nebraska parents indicated a 76 percent satisfaction rate for transition planning for their child.

Administrators in Nebraska are accountable for the achievement of students. As an example, public need only log on to Nebraska Department of Education's (NDE) website (<http://reportcard.nde.state.us>) and check the report card for each individual school. The Special Populations Office of NDE is in the process of developing a

"Continuous Improvement Review" to further enhance this report card. Nebraska has implemented regional programs to serve students who are deaf/hard of hearing or diagnosed with autism. In addition, quality professional development is available for staff and administrators through a variety of grants written by practicing special educators and made available to schools and ESU's through NDE. The Student Record System (SRS) and other computerized systems are available to Nebraska schools to help educators reduce the amount of time they spend on paperwork and allow more time with students. Parents have the choice of option enrolling their child into another district if they are unhappy with services.

The point I am attempting to make is that administrators in our schools see the "Big Picture." We hold ourselves accountable for student achievement and are responsive to the parents and children we serve. Working collaboratively with NDE and ESU's, school districts are offering a high quality education with very limited resources. In addition to addressing the Commission's Report, administrators contend with local issues such as school finance,

shortage of special education staff, unique educational needs of students, and availability of services in rural areas. While IDEA Reauthorization will impact all of us, it will provide us an opportunity to examine and improve educational services for our students and demonstrate the high quality programs we already have available throughout Nebraska.

The administrators with whom I work in Northeast Nebraska and through the Nebraska Association of Special Education Supervisors (NASES) continue to keep students' educational needs foremost in planning. They have a far-reaching vision and an ingrained mission to aid students with disabilities. When we view the quality of educational programs available for students and consider their achievements, we should be proud of the accomplishments of students with special needs. In fact for many of us in the field of administration, the success of individual students provides us with job satisfaction. Administrators in our state do what is right for students by making all education "Special." 

WHAT ARE BOARDS LOOKING FOR...

(continued from page 6)

priorities stated them this way:

- Strong leader who motivates and manages staff to achieve maximum performance.
- Accountable for the overall performance of the school district including employee performance.

Degree of Importance

What is the degree of importance for the eleven areas that boards of education focus on when selecting a superintendent? The overwhelming top criterion is leadership. Of the 635 criteria, 29 percent dealt with leadership skills. Boards want their superintendents to be leaders. Next is personal character (15 percent) followed closely by finance (14 percent). Boards want their superinten-

dents to be above reproach in their moral character and expect them to be role models. They also expect them to understand the financing of education and to be good stewards of the public purse. Boards also believe that superintendents should be good communicators (11 percent). They believe that the superintendent should be a good listener first, followed by excellent writing and speaking ability. Community involvement (8 percent) is the next criterion. Boards want superintendents who live in the community and become visible and an active participant in the community. Student centered and knowledgeable in education are tied with 7 percent. Student achievement and knowledge of instructional practices share equal importance. Knowledge of school law and the legislative process was at 5 percent. Experience as a superintendent and advanced degree followed with 2

percent. Finally facilities and supervision of staff come in with less than 1 percent each.

Take note, if you are in the market to seek a superintendency, you must convince boards that you are a strong leader with impeccable morals and are an expert in finance. You need to demonstrate excellent communication skills, especially listening; and must live in, and be active in the community. You should be student centered and knowledgeable of the best practices and current educational trends. You should demonstrate a good background in school law and understand the legislative process. Experience as a superintendent and a doctorate degree are helpful as well as an understanding of facility issues and supervision of staff. 



NEED MORE TRAINING...

(continued from page 9)

programs. He or she may idealistically believe that more training is taking place than is actually occurring. Another discrepancy may be that the building administrators used a different definition of "training" than the special education teachers and the paraprofessionals. For example, building administrators may view the teachers' on-the-job instruction to the paraprofessionals as training, while the paraprofessionals may not. The difference in the perceptions of the building administrators as compared to the special education teachers and paraprofessionals is an important concept to investigate and understand. By doing so, school districts could better address the needs of the staff and students and avoid wasting time, effort, and resources.

Reasons for Lack of Sufficient Training

There are many factors that could contribute to this lack of training. For example, leaders of staff development programs in most public schools struggle to find the time and resources to provide appropriate training to their certified teaching staff. School budgets are tight and priorities have to be made, so paraprofessionals, who are classified staff with a high turnover rate, are often neglected.

Time is another resource that contributes to priorities and choices. Finding the time to become informed or to train others on specific legislation and other relevant topics is difficult at all levels. There are limited substitutes for paraprofessionals, and paraprofessionals are often paid only for days worked when school is in session. To bring in paraprofessionals on in-service days would often require additional resources, which are often not available.

Progress Has Been Made!

While the need for additional training is obvious from this study, it must not be overlooked that progress has indeed

been made. Paraprofessionals are remaining in their positions longer today than they did 20 years ago. In 1982, Vasa, Steckelberg and Ronning reported 84 percent of the paraprofessionals participating in their study had been employed less than 5 years in their position, indicating a very high turnover rate. In this study, 62 percent of the paraprofessionals had been employed less than 5 years, indicating a 22 percent increase in paraprofessional longevity in the last eighteen years.

The perception of "no training being offered" to paraprofessionals has also lowered significantly since 1982. Table 2 shows that the Vasa et al. (1982) study found 60% of the administrators that they surveyed reported no paraprofessional training was occurring, but none did so in the recent Schonewise study. The teachers' and paraprofessionals' perception of no paraprofessional training has also decreased since 1982. It is reassuring to see that the effort made by so many educators to increase the

als, no matter when they join the staff, are receiving adequate and appropriate training. This systematic method should be documented and understood at all levels.

- Initial training for newly hired paraprofessionals must be administered prior to paraprofessional placement in classrooms and schools. The curriculum for this training needs to have the capability of being implemented on an individual basis. In this way, paraprofessionals hired in the middle of a school year can be required to complete the training before placement.

- Ongoing training is essential for further growth and to maximize productivity to better meet the needs of all students. A structured systematic process needs to be in place to assure that ongoing training is occurring and is effective. Formal, classroom training on relevant topics with a practice component is one known effective method of offering training (Joyce and Showers 1980).

**TABLE 2
PERCEPTIONS OF NO TRAINING OFFERED TO NEWLY EMPLOYED PARAPROFESSIONALS**

<u>Study</u>	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Group Teachers</u>	<u>Paraprofessionals</u>
Vasa Steckelberg & Ronning (1982)	60%	82%	81%
Schonewise (2001)	0%	11%	56%

amount of paraprofessional training is having a positive impact.

Recommendations for Schools and Districts

This study clearly indicates that more paraprofessional training is needed. The following are recommendations derived from this study in order to increase the amount of effective paraprofessional training.

- Every school and school district needs to develop a systematic method to provide training to paraprofessionals and determine whose responsibility it is to make sure that the training is taking place. The method should be continually reviewed to determine its effectiveness and to determine of all paraprofession-

- Study teams are another method of meeting paraprofessional training needs. Teams of teachers and paraprofessionals could be formed in areas of like training topic interests. Using Stiggins' model and organizational framework, the study/learning teams could research the topics and share their learning by reports back to the team. (Stiggins 2000)

- Additional planning and reflection time is another method of on-going training. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals are working continually to provide the day-to-day services to their students. This is often done without much discussion or reflection. Additional compensated hours are needed, where

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NRCSA NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

by Matt Blomstedt, Executive Director, NRCSA

First of all, thank you to NCSA and Jerry Sellentin for offering me the opportunity to introduce myself in this format. I look forward to working with NCSA to strive for a positive future for schools and students across the state. I am a strong believer in cooperation and coordination between education interests and I know that NCSA and NRCSA will have many opportunities to work together in the future.

The Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association has always relied on members to run the organization through its various committees and obviously with the dedication of Gary Fisher. The selection of an Executive Director for NRCSA was often discussed but never necessary as Gary made the success of the organization a lifetime priority. I am honored to be named to serve as the director of NRCSA and look forward to a career in service to Nebraska's rural schools.

I like to say that I've been working for rural schools for my entire life. I was raised in Palisade, where my father was a member of the Palisade School Board. There were few evenings as I was growing up that school business wasn't at the forefront of the conversation at the dinner table. This was especially true during the rural economic crisis of the early 1980s that forced Palisade and most rural schools to question how they would continue to exist. Palisade was also among the original NRCSA schools and I can remember how important the development of a specific rural voice for education was to the Palisade school board and administration. Richard Finley and Stan Kravig were at Palisade in the '80s and were both instrumental to the development of NRCSA. I have been fortunate to get to work with them in last few years – they aren't nearly as frightening as they seemed in my elementary years with my few visits to their offices for some undeserved punishment.

I graduated from Palisade in 1990 and began a career at the UNL where I graduated with a degree in Political Science in 1994. I started a working on

a Masters in Community and Regional Planning at UNL in 1996 and graduated in 1998. Now I will formally begin working on an Ed.D. at UNL this spring semester.

I began to work with NRCSA in 1997 as I was a research assistant with the Rural Development Commission working on school finance issues. Since that time I have continued to work with NRCSA conducting policy analysis. At the beginning of this year I was hired directly by NRCSA to continue in my research role as well to begin to learn the "ropes" from Gary Fisher. In effect, I was supposed to help Gary however necessary – he usually joked that I was supposed to drive him to the casinos regardless of any objections from my wife. Over the past several months, Gary and I met to work on planning for NRCSA's future and to begin to prepare for the upcoming meetings and conferences.

Our planning identified three priorities that I will continue to pursue as director. First was communications. We are working to develop our Web site (www.nrca.net) and have developed a

listserv that can be subscribed to online. We are also developing a regular quarterly newsletter for members and affiliates. The second priority we identified was program development. This will include NRCSA's traditional legal seminar, spring conference, and member meetings. Additionally, we are exploring developing a rural teacher training and recruitment program, school-community planning and development services, and fall regional policy discussions. These and others are still in the planning phases. The third priority is membership and business affiliate development. A fourth priority that is rapidly developing for the organization is hosting the National Rural Education Association conference in Kearney next October.

NRCSA's mission remains the same to strive for "Quality Rural Schools." My goal as director of NRCSA is to continue the tradition for the organization and to help sustain the strong voice for rural education that the organization has become.

Thanks again to NCSA for this opportunity, and now I better get to work.





LET'S KEEP IT SPECIAL...SOME THOUGHTS ON RETHINKING SPECIAL EDUCATION

by Steve Milliken, Westside Community Schools, National President-Elect of Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)

More than a quarter century ago, President Ford signed legislation to ensure educational opportunities for those students across this country with significant disabilities who were not equally educated. This legislation, now known as the IDEA, covers over six million children ages three through twentyone, with an estimated cost of special education for these students at approximately \$79 billion.

Federal legislation has been quite successful in its quest to secure opportunities for those individuals who have significant cognitive and physical delays. Inclusion of these students in our public educational systems has truly enhanced learning environments for all students.

While the federal legislation has done extraordinary things for many students with disabilities, there are two areas of concern which we need to take a look at. The **first** being the fact that our special education system is based on a compliance model of accountability. In this model, our special education effectiveness tends to be defined in terms of whether or not procedural regulations were satisfied, the proper steps were taken, and whether we completed the correct paperwork on time. We are so focused on dotting i's and crossing t's that we fail to look closely at how students are progressing within the system. An audit of special education programs is an audit in procedures; it's not an audit of successful student interventions. While there are many ideas out there as to how to move in this direction, it is imperative that we do make the move.

The **second** important issue is the number of students being placed within special education. The largest number of those students being placed are those that fall within the mild range of services, i.e. SLD, SLP, etc. For example, in the area of Special Learning Disabilities, the number of students identified has grown 233 percent since 1976-77. During that same time frame, all other disability categories combined grew only 13 percent.

Can we make a difference for these students who fall into this category? I

think the answer to the questions is, yes! It is important to remember that there are students who are truly learning disabled. However, according to many experts, the lack of a clear definition across the country makes it possible to diagnose almost any low or underachieving child as SLD. Dr. James Ysseldyke at the National Center on Education Outcomes asserts that 80 percent of all school children could qualify as SLD under one definition or another. Is it necessary to label this large number of students and what are we doing to improve their education program?

I believe we need to look at two things within the confines of education to address these issues. One, and it is not a new thought, is to intervene early before the label is necessary. Within the confines of regular education in Kindergarten, First and Second grade, teams of educators can intervene with direct instructional programming to have an impact that can make a difference. School psychologists, reading professionals, classroom teachers and others can

make a difference at this level; intervene now rather than label the students later.

Secondly, we need to examine what we are doing for these students once we label them. What is so special about their education? Special education staff need to upgrade their own understanding in the area of reading development. Progress monitoring of student success led by school psychologists and other special educators must be provided. Closely tracking the growth of students with mild disabilities within both regular and special education needs to be done throughout the system.

These adjustments can be made with the resources we have. Re-thinking the use of the staff that we have and the interventions that we use can make a difference for the majority of those students now being placed in the special education programs.

Since the first signing of federal law, we have made a huge difference for students with disabilities. It's been very special. So let's keep it that way. 

NEED MORE TRAINING...

[continued from page 12]

paraprofessionals and special education teachers can work to set goals and review/discuss student programs, daily schedules, IEP's, and paraprofessionals' duties and roles.

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Calendar of Events

DECEMBER, 2002

- 4 NCSA Legislative Preview, 8:30 a.m., Cornhusker Hotel Lincoln
- 5 NAESP Executive Board, 9:30 a.m., LeRoy Hoehner Conf. Ctr (NCSA) Lincoln
- 11 NASA Region V, 12:00 noon, Gaslight Gering

JANUARY, 2003

- 8 NASA Region V, 10:00 a.m., Country Club Alliance
- 8 NASA Region I, 5:00 p.m., Ameritas Investment Corp. Lincoln
- 8 NSASSP Region I, 5:30 p.m., Seward Country Club Seward
- 9 NASA Region IV, 10:00 a.m., ESU #10 Kearney
- 22 NAESP Region IV, 12:00 noon, Alley Rose Kearney
- 22 NSASSP Region IV, 1:30 p.m., ESU #10 Kearney
- 22 NSASSP Region II, 5:30 p.m., Elks Lodge Omaha
- 29 NAESP Region II, 5:30 p.m., German American Society Omaha
- 31 NAESP Region I, 2:00 p.m., Midwinter Conference Milford

FEBRUARY, 2003

- 4 NCSA Executive Board, 8:30 a.m. Kearney
- 4 NASA Executive Board, 5:00 p.m., Ramada Inn Kearney
- 5 NAESP Region V, 9:30 a.m., Valentino's Ogallala
- 5 NSASSP Region V, 10:00 a.m., Valentino's Ogallala
- 5 NAESP Region III, 3:00 p.m., Wayne State College Wayne
- 5 NSASSP Executive Board, 3:00 p.m., Midtown Holiday Inn Grand Island
- 13 NASES/NDE Joint Meeting, 1:00 p.m., Cornhusker Hotel Lincoln
- 19 NSASSP Region III, 2:00 p.m., ESU #1 Wakefield

2003 NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

- AASA - February 20-23 - New Orleans, LA
- NASSP - February 21-24 - San Diego, CA
- ASCD - March 8-10 - San Francisco, CA
- NSBA - April 5-8 - San Francisco, CA
- NAESP - April 12-15 - Anaheim, CA

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