

NEBRASKA TAXPAYERS FOR FREEDOM ISSUE PAPER:

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION NOTES: MAY 8, 2026.

DENIAL OF ACCESS. NE state law requires public schools to allow military recruiters access to high school students in addition to the access allowed private business, college, and university recruiters. However, a complaint to the State Board alleges that the Gretna Public School District and Beatrice Public School District denied access to National Guard recruiters. There exist several advantages of joining the National Guard. Students can attend college here debt free and remain in the state, contributing to our economy. They would become available for emergency responses and become valuable for their technical skills. Net outflow of youth would lessen, because jobs kept in NE.

EARLY CHILDHOOD GRANTS. The Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant is a grant from the federal Dept. of Education. NE received millions in grants in 2024 for resources such as professional development and instructional materials, utilized over a 5-year period. Board member Elizabeth Tegtmeier, who represents the western half of NE, voiced concern that the money was not reaching every school district after being informed that our literacy project and our funding would train all 23,000 NE teachers in evidence-based reading instruction. “I believe that the current plan to use the funds is too narrow to accomplish that,” she said. There are 46 subgrantees listed, including school districts, educational service units that represent multiple districts, and several other education organizations. Board member Lisa Schonhoff believed it irresponsible to expand the program, because state taxpayers are assuming more funding burdens. She also said there is a constitutional obligation to educate students from ages 5 to 21 but not for those of pre-school or younger age. By expanding high-cost programs for those under 5, we are placing an unconstitutional extravagant burden on the backs of hardworking taxpayers. She added that at a time when Nebraskans are demanding tax relief, we must prioritize our constitutional mandates over optional high-cost expansions. She also questioned how beneficial pre-school programs are as students grow older. Board member Sherry Jones believed that pre-school was not a requirement for future success. “If parents want to send their children to preschool, I say go for it, but taxpayers should not be expected to foot the bill,” she said. Jones noted that children appear academically successful without these pre-K programs. 34 yrs. of data do not show long-term academic gains from early childhood programs. 40% of our state budget already funds public education. Taxpayer criticism of Early Childhood Educational Grants, supposed to enhance student achievement, continues. NE already has accepted several grants, but it is irresponsible to continue this program that eventually will cost NE taxpayers. From 2021-2025, the federal government sent much early childhood funding to the states. However, now state General Fund money is paying for these programs, spending record amounts unnecessarily. Assumed academic improvement does not equal costs. The state education dept. has data on the academic impact of these programs, so we can tell if these funds improve academic levels or merely present a taxpayer burden. Many NE school districts establish their own pre-K instruction. Special education begins at age 3; these children have access to all programs. The best option for them is early childhood education, said an Education Dept. employee, that teachers select the best methods. The State Board of Education narrowly approved a 3rd year of grants supporting literacy efforts in schools and the creation and expansions of pre-schools. **Voting YES**, to continue paying for pre-K programs and against taxpayers: Christensen, Douglas, Renner, Tegtmeier. **Voting NO, with taxpayers:** Jones, Penner, Schoenhoff.

ANOTHER PROJECT. The NE Improvement Grant Project costs \$100,000. Concern about this project protecting student private data. Dept. makes an effort to protect juvenile justice private records. 56 NE school districts will receive grants to help kids in reading proficiency. The dept. can repeal grants, if a district does not follow guidelines. Private schools cannot receive grants.

SOCIAL STUDIES REVISION. Revising this curriculum began in June, 2025. A preliminary draft done. Public input still solicited until June 10, 2026. A link available at the dept. website for public input: <https://www.education.ne.gov/socialstudies/social-studies-standards-revision-2>. The state board will conclude revision in Aug., 2026 and present the revision to the public. We urge our NTF members to examine this revision and offer suggestions to make the contents more conservative.

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