Take a Look INSIDE:

Message from the President
Josh Allen, Lewis Central Community Schools

Better Together

WHEN A DISTRICT OR SCHOOL needs to promote more of a family culture, many of them turn to a theme similar to "better together." The premise behind it is that our organization is better off if we all work toward a common goal. While that task is rarely easy, the reward is extremely positive for those involved.

For the last few years, we have tried to make NETA a resource for more school districts and organizations. From simply sharing their social media posts to a wider audience, reviewing our conference evaluations, or our more recent endeavor of partnering with other state organizations and conferences, we want to leverage our position as a large regional organization to help you achieve your goals that align with our goals. As I'm sure you've memorized, NETA "exists for the purpose of providing leadership and promoting the application of technology to the educational process. Its span of interest includes all levels and aspects of education" (From our website: *http://netasite.org/*).

We provide opportunities for you to learn and network in the fall and spring at large events, but we also sponsor events like the technology coordinators meeting, among others. In the past five years or so, we have noticed that many of you have started hosting great events in your own schools. We have reached out to many of you to see if there is a way for us to help out. In some cases, NETA has been able to help sponsor an event through promotion or the use of our Sched account for an electronic program. If you think that we can be a resource for your school's event, send NETA's Executive Director, Julie or me an email and we'll talk! All NETA email addresses are on our page two of this newsletter.

We have relied on you for nearly 30 years to help grow and improve our conferences, and you have responded with amazing presentations and constructive feedback. The spring conference

NETA Newsletter

Published four times yearly.
Contributions are welcome.

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In this issue

If you can share a success story related to technology in the classroom, or a software solution review, we'd love to print it in a future newsletter.

Contact Julie Moore, phone (402) 540-1904 or e-mail executivedirector@netasite.org with a short summary to see if your story can be included in a future issue!❖

ISTE
Affiliate Member

NETA is an affiliate of ISTE—The International Society for Technology in Education.

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Message from the President Elect

Better Together: Why We Still Venture to Omaha (and Beyond)

*Jackie Ediger
Educational
Service Unit 9,
Hastings*

DESPITE IMPROVED video conferencing tools, great social media posts from people who share amazing resources and opportunities to learn almost anything from YouTube, attendance at the NETA Conference continues to grow each year. Schools budget precious dollars for NETA conference registration fees and travel costs, teachers craft sub plans and tend to myriad other details that are necessary to leave their classroom for two days in late spring. With financial challenges facing our schools, many of you will even pay your own way to the NETA Conference in April because it is so important to you.

Why is being physically surrounded by colleagues who challenge you, support you and listen to you still so important?

Learn from each other

Unfortunately, our schedules are often so packed with the great work we're doing in our own schools, sometimes my best professional development happens in between presentations at conferences far enough from home that we all need to unpack and stay for a few days. As friends and colleagues, we get the chance to have unrushed conversations, time to demo each of our favorite tech tools together, and the chance to just learn from each other. When I look back to my time at the newly named Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC) in Orlando earlier this year, I realized that while the sessions offered through the conference were great, I also learned just as much from Nebraska friends I traveled with to the conference.

In the hotel breakfast room, over relaxed dinners or even on the bus to and from the conference hotel, we shared what we learned and planned how to best share a new resource with colleagues at home. One evening we even played a new teamwork game one friend brought along, and I can't wait to purchase it to use with colleagues. When we didn't win the billion dollar lottery, we treated ourselves to a consolation prize at a local escape room designed around the Cuban missile crisis to help us better understand the model that sparked the amazing Breakout EDU inquiry-based learning model that is sweeping the globe.

Life-long learner

One thing I love about being in education is the constant learning, collaborating and sharing that is evident and happening in our field. Educators are passionate about sharing and working together for the simple reason of making teaching and learning better and more meaningful to students no matter what it takes to find the time and resources to do it.

The phrase "life-long learner" comes to mind as I write this. Recently, I came across this quote and I feel it truly states what we believe as educators. We strive to make ourselves better learners, teachers and leaders.

"There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning."
~Jiddu Krishnamurti

The same for students

Whether this is through graduate coursework, attending conferences, participating in workshops, or simply having collaborative conversations, we are learning. After all, isn't that what we want our students to embrace also?

A significant part of what we learn and share comes from other "life-long learners" that we find and stick with. These people become our tribe. We need our tribe. As we push to better ourselves personally and professionally we learn, collaborate, and share with these people. Together we share our passions, challenges and ideas, and then we strive to make ourselves better educators.

Who is your Tribe?

As you reflect on your own personal learning journey, give credit where credit is due- who is YOUR Tribe? Who makes you a better teacher and a constant learner? Who makes you a better person? We hope you find time to relax and talk to them between sessions at the spring conference, over dinner in the Old Market or while tackling a game in our Breakout EDU Room. I look forward to meeting you there, too! ❖

The Election Results are In!

Announcing the New 2016 NETA Officers and Directors

MANY THANKS to all of you who voted during the online election. Thanks also to all of the candidates on the ballot for their willingness to serve. All candidates were certainly worthy and you will hopefully see some of them on the ballot again in the future! The following people were elected.

Officers

Matt Lee
President Elect
Westside Community Schools

The **President Elect** serves for one year in this position and then moves into the role of the President. The President Elect is responsible for helping to plan the conference.

Darci Lindgren
Secretary
Lindsay Holy Family School

The Secretary is elected every two years. The secretary keeps records of the meetings of the Board of Directors, tracks meeting attendance and files and distributes changes in policy issues adopted at board meetings.

Congratulations to Matt and Darci for being elected to these offices!

Director—One Year Term
(Remainder of Matt Lee's term)

Wendy Loewenstein
Omaha Public Schools
Director 2017

Directors, Three-year term

Heather Callihan
Northwest Public Schools
Director 2019

Peg Coover
Educational Service Unit #10
Director 2019

Tina Sauser
Boone Central Schools
Director 2019

Jason Schmidt
Bennington Public Schools
Director 2019

Leaving the Board this Year

The following people will be leaving the board this year as their terms expire. Each retiring Board member has willingly contributed endless hours of time, thought and effort into the organization and will be missed.

Gregg Robke, Educational Service Unit #4—Gregg has served on the NETA board for many years in different capacities. He has been an active board member on many committees. Most recently, Gregg served in the capacities of President Elect, President and Past President. Many hours go into each of these leadership roles. During his term of presidency, the NETA board moved to a free membership model and held its spring conference at the CenturyLink Center Omaha for the first time. Gregg spent many hours helping with the additional planning it took to move the conference to a new venue. Thank you, Gregg, for all you do for NETA!

Angie Wassenmiller, Concordia University—Angie has served on the NETA board for two terms. Her leadership has been vital in helping increase NETA's reach to pre-service teachers, which hopefully will continue to grow in the future. Angie served on many committees throughout her terms and helped reshape the contest structure this past year. When given a task, Angie worked quickly to complete it. Thank you, Angie, for all of your hard work and dedication to NETA!

Our sincere thanks to both of these great leaders. All of their contributions have continued to help NETA grow to what it is today.

Would you like to serve?

If you would like to be more active in NETA by serving on the NETA Board of Directors, consider being a nominee in 2017. Four Director positions are open each year, as well as the President Elect and either Secretary or Treasurer (elected every other year). Watch for the call for nominees in the November newsletter. ❖
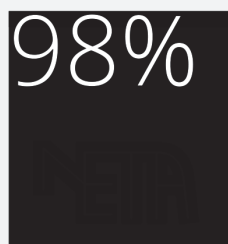
2016 SPRING CONFERENCE

NETA Nebraska Educational Technology Association

April 21 - 22, 2016 | CenturyLink Center, Omaha, NE

CONFERENCE INFORMATION

98%
ATTENDEE SATISFACTION RATE

99% WOULD RECOMMEND THE CONFERENCE TO SOMEONE ELSE

OVER 100 CORPORATE SPONSORS/EXHIBITORS *supporting NETA's Purpose and Vision*

1 IN EVERY **13** NEBRASKA EDUCATORS ATTENDS *the* CONFERENCE

Attendance was over 2,500 Educators at 2015 Spring Conference

190+ BREAKOUT SESSIONS OFFERED

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED *Keynote/Featured Speakers*

OVER 375
SCHOOL DISTRICT and ESU TECHNOLOGY
"Decision-makers" attend the conference, and many more "influencers"

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION
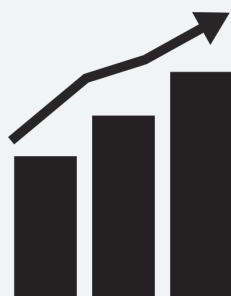
6% AVERAGE MEMBERSHIP INCREASE
Over the last 7 years

12% *this* PAST YEAR

MEMBERS *from the* **FOLLOWING:**

- Beijing
- Florida
- Kansas
- Michigan
- North Carolina
- Rhode Island
- California
- Illinois
- Louisiana
- Missouri
- Ohio
- South Dakota
- Colorado
- Iowa
- Massachusetts
- Nebraska
- Pennsylvania
- Texas

NETA INFORMATION

PURPOSE
The Nebraska Educational Technology Association (NETA) is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization that provides leadership and promotes the application of technology to the educational process.

VISION
The Nebraska educational process will promote utilization of appropriate technology to support quality teaching and learning.

STAY IN TOUCH

@yourNETA   www.netasite.org

NETA Conference Site 2016
Welcome to the CenturyLink Center Omaha Convention Center!

The NETA 2016 annual spring conference will be held at the CenturyLink Center Omaha Convention Center. This location offers easy access, state of the art facilities, and more productive conference activities space.

Location
- 455 North 10th Street, Omaha, NE 68102
- *http://netasite.org/ centurylinkcenteromahadirections*

Parking
Conference attendees may park in Lot B or D. Parking cost is $8 per entry.
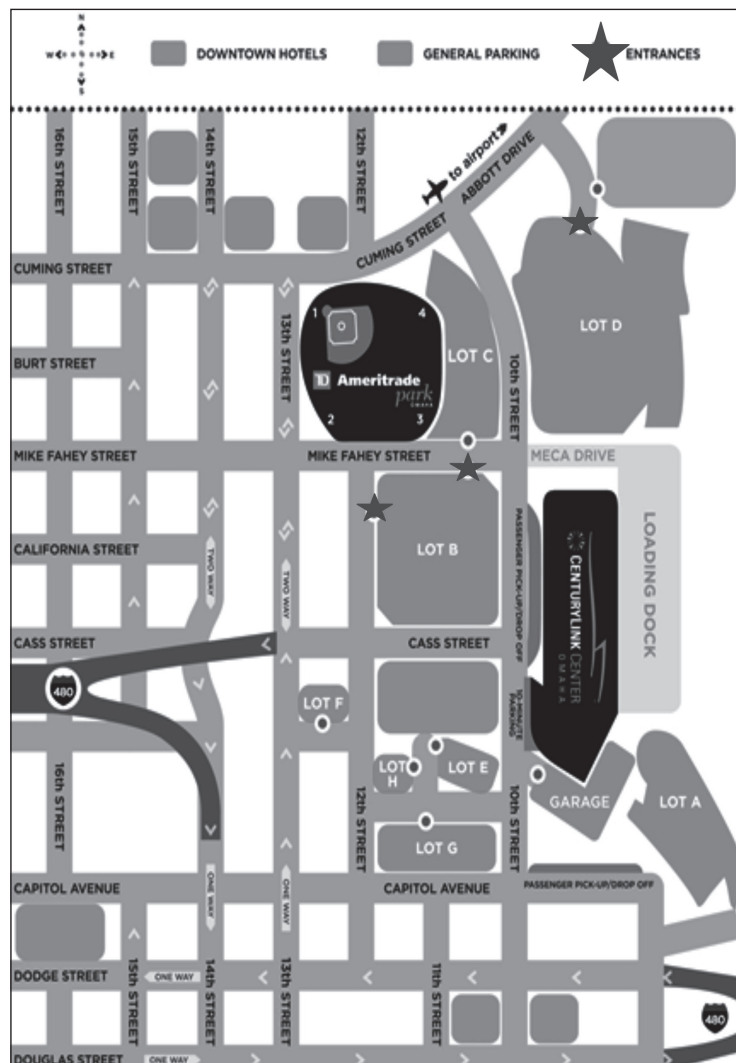
Lodging accommodations
NETA has agreements with three hotels in downtown Omaha for conference group rates: Hilton Omaha (connected to the CenturyLink Center Omaha), Courtyard by Marriott—Omaha Downtown, and Hilton Garden Inn—Omaha Downtown. For more information, please check the NETA website: *http://netasite.org/ hotelregistrationneta2016*

Convention Center Parking Options

Conference Food Choices
- Gourmet Coffee Cart
- Alexander's BBQ
- Philly Cheesesteak Cart

Concession stand located in Exhibit Hall:
- Smoked Andouille Sausage
- Chili Cheese Coney
- Nacho Grandeo
- Jumbo Hot Dog
- Nachos, Pretzels & Popcorn
- Beverages

Conversation Strand
- Held in Convention Center, room 209 on Thursday from 11:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Come learn from the group

Registration
- Located in Exhibit Hall
- Wednesday night registration hours are 5:00–7:00 p.m.

Omaha
To find out more about Omaha you may visit *http://netasite.org/ visitomaha.*

Graduation Credit for NETA
Participants who attend both days of the NETA Conference can earn one hour of graduate credit through Peru State College. Interested participants will meet briefly with Gregg Robke on Thursday morning at 9:30 outside of the Grand Ballroom, directly after the General Session. **Tuition:** Nebraska Residence—$191.25 per credit hour + applicable fees of $72.10. Non-Residence—$382.50 per credit hour + applicable fees of $72.10.

We look forward to welcoming you to the CenturyLink Center Omaha! ❖

CenturyLink Center Omaha Meeting Room Map
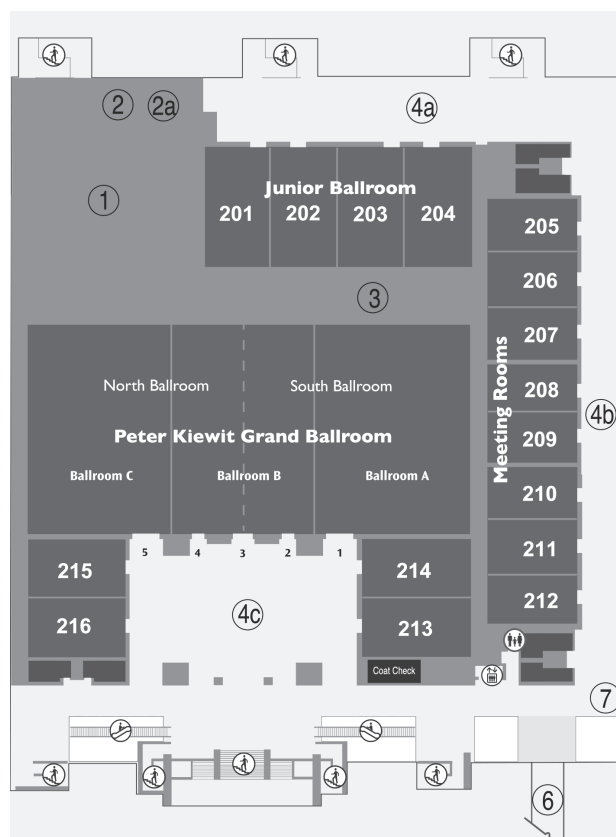
◀ The meeting room level of the CenturyLink Center Omaha offers 63,000 square feet of flexible meeting space all located on the second level. All rooms feature multiple outlets, telephone and data connections as well as individual programmable lighting. The facility's open, contemporary design allows for easy access to all areas.

The Exhibit Hall encompasses over 194,00 square feet of contiguous space which is divisible into three separate halls. **NETA is using Hall A**, allowing an expanded number of exhibitors in this large space. Each hall features a concession stand, restrooms and a show office. ▼

CenturyLink Center Omaha Exhibit Hall Map
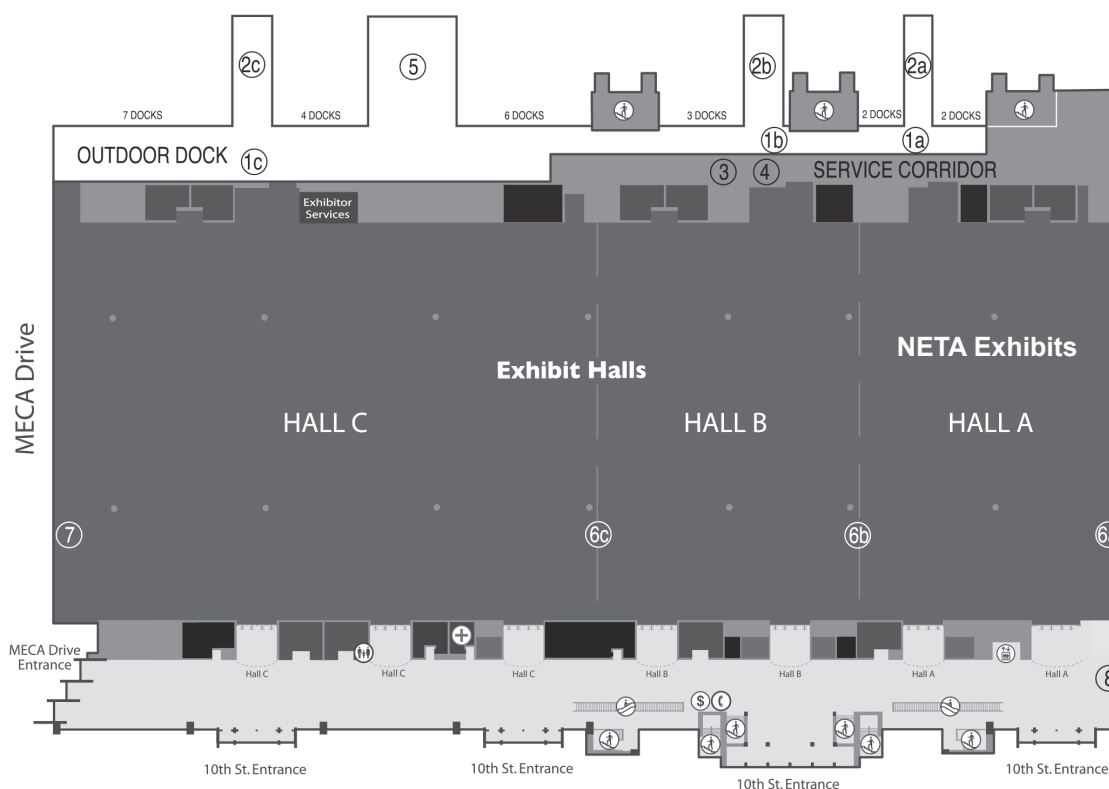
Spring Conference Highlights and Information

Embrace Your Passion

April 21-22, 2016
CenturyLink Center Omaha

Pre-conference workshops

Pre-conference workshops are being held on Wednesday, April 20th at the Hilton Omaha. Check *netasite.org* for descriptions along with additional information about the workshops.

Invited Speakers

This year's keynote speakers will be participating in "Neb Ed Talks," short talks designed to inspire you to Embrace Your Passion. There will be two presentations each morning.

Neb Ed Talk Speakers Thursday:
- Robert Dillon—*Have You Noticed?*
- Jennie Magiera—*Inner City Innovation: Taking Risks in High-risk Situations*

Neb Ed Talk Speakers Friday:
- Rafranz Davis—*Opening the Doors of Diversity in EdTech*
- Tony Vincent—*Reset the Presets*

Featured Thursday:
- Robert Dillon
- Jennie Magiera
- Alice Steinglass (Sponsored by NETA, CSTA, and the UNL Department of Computer Science and Engineering)
- Therese Willkomm (Sponsored by Assistive Technology Partnership/Education)

Featured Friday:
- Tony Vincent
- Rachelle Wooten
- Paige Jaeger (Co-sponsored by Nebraska School Librarians Association & NETA)

Featured Thursday and Friday:
- Ken Shelton

Online schedule by *Sched*

NETA is utilizing a personalized online conference schedule for our 2016 spring conference! Powered by *Sched*, attendee's will have the ability to browse the full schedule, see the list of registered exhibitors, search by strand or topic, plan out a customized schedule and connect with other attendees and presenters! Visit *https://2016springnetaconference.sched.org* to get started today!

There are numerous session types to choose from including, lecture/demonstration, conversation, and poster/playground sessions. Don't miss the Makerspace Playground sponsored by Nebraska Public Power District on Thursday from 12:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For more information regarding the Spring Conference or NETA, visit *http://netasite.org*. Please join us April 20–22nd! ❖

Who Moved the Front of the Room?

Ann Feldmann
Bellevue Public Schools

I WALKED INTO a 1:1 elementary iPad classroom and knew it had happened. There was a happy hum in the room, kids were working independently in soft spaces, and the vibe in the room was productive and calm. Where was the front of the room? Where was the teacher?

The disruptive blended classroom

What I am describing is a disruptive blended classroom as defined by Michael B. Horn and Heather Staker in the book *Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools*. "There is a simple rule of thumb for spotting a disruptive model of blending learning: if students are learning in a blended setting, and you can't figure out where the front of the classroom is then it's probably a disruptive model (Horn, Staker (p.76)." I have witnessed this shift happen several times as we have implemented 1:1 iPad classrooms in my district. Teaching and learning looks very different from the traditional model we envision when we think of a classroom and school. Instead of finding a teacher delivering content in one unifying message from the front of the room, teachers are crafting a personalized learning environment grounded in pedagogy, choice, and creation which shifts the teacher from the front of the room to working alongside students and a shift from desks to soft spaces throughout the room.

How does a shift like this happen?

Developing a blended learning culture within the classroom day is the key. Blended learning is defined as, "A formal education program in which a student learns: at least in part through online learning, with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace; at least in part in a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home; and the modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience." [1] As an iPad coach, I work in classrooms alongside students and teachers. From Day 1, we begin to craft this blended environment.

[1] Christensen Institute." Christensen Institute Blended Learning Comments. Web. 26 Jan. 2016.

Here are a few steps to get started.

1. Set up a blended classroom workflow using tools such as iTunes, Google Classroom or a learning management system such as Schoology or Canvas so students can have control over time, place, path, and/or pace. This is the place to design the content and deliver course materials. Once this workflow is in place, it is easy for students to access and submit assignments anytime, anywhere. Not only is this great workflow, but it also provides feedback and privately differentiates for every child seamlessly.

2. Leverage the audio and video capabilities to provide students choice and independence in how they learn and how they demonstrate mastery of objectives. Both teaching and learning is now multimodal where students have more options for creation that includes audio and video.

3. Create soft spaces in the classroom and give students the freedom of movement and collaboration so they can work individually and with one another naturally throughout the day.

4. Let go and let them learn. As you shift to working alongside your students, take advantage of the time to conference individually and provide guidance to small groups.

5. Be patient with yourself and your students. It takes time and perseverance to craft this environment.

How are you creating a blended learning classroom for your students? ❖

CenturyLink Teachers and Technology Grant 2015
Final Reports

THE CENTURYLINK Clarke M. Williams Foundation's Teachers and Technology Grant program awarded a $20,000 grant to the Nebraska Educational Technology Association. With these funds CenturyLink provided classroom grants to PreK-12 teachers who demonstrated an innovative use of technology in the classroom.

Four Nebraska schools were selected in 2015 to receive grant funds. Each project's full mid-term report was included in the NETA November newsletter issue. Their final reports have indicated their objectives are being met and they are continuing to move forward in a positive direction.

Julie Hartman and Karen Crawford, Elkhorn Middle School

Using iPads For Authentic Assessment & Differentiated Learning: $4881.15

The 12 iPads that we received with this grant have been utilized in many different ways. Teachers have used them for quick formative assessments using such apps as Kahoot!, Formative, and Quizalize. In addition, we are encouraging the use of Socrative to quickly measure understanding of core concepts. This immediate feedback has proven extremely helpful to teachers.

Educreations proved very valuable in the science classroom, providing a way for students to narrate as they demonstrated knowledge of such things as the water cycle, cellular structure and function, etc. They were also used to document/present the process and results of scientific inquiry projects. Having immediate access to audio, video, photo, and time lapse apps kept the students more engaged in and connected to the learning at hand.

iPads have been used with all ability levels, from HALE kids working with AR apps to struggling readers trying to improve their reading comprehension.

The only noticeable drawback was the number of iPads available. There were times teachers would have preferred an iPad for every student.

Thank you so much for this grant opportunity and for the generosity of CenturyLink and the NETA organization. Elkhorn Middle School students and staff benefited greatly from this experience.

Angie Palmer, St. Vincent de Paul, Omaha

Robotic Engineering Course: $4,827.62

Because of the grant I received through Century Link, making robotic opportunities happen in our school became a reality. We had several goals for our first year.

Goal #1: Implement Robotics Engineering Courses for 7th and 8th Grade Students

We were able to offer a course to 7th graders (Semester 1) and 8th graders (Semester 2) and had enough robots to accommodate all those who were interested.

Goal #2: Engage Students in Use of Higher Order Thinking Skills and excel in STEM

The nature of robotics, along with the variety of challenges presented to the students, allowed for this goal to be achieved. Many skills such as creative thinking, problem solving, decision-making, and troubleshooting occurred every time students interacted with their robots in trying to solve their challenges. These are important skills to make them successful in any class, job, or life-experience. They also put their STEM skills to the test when they were calculating force, measuring distances, programming, and constructing/designing their robot.

Goal #3: Expand Instructor Skill Set

I have been somewhat familiar with robotics in the past, but this year my knowledge has increased tremendously. I am able to pass on more knowledge and guidance to my students. It has been a great opportunity for me (and my students). We plan on continuing this program every year, and look to offer more opportunities for our students to be involved in robotics.

Laura Swanson, Bellevue Public Schools

littleBits of Information: $4335

The goal of our project was to develop students' interest in STEM-related subjects in an engaging and cooperative learning environment. Through this grant, we procured

(Grant reports, continued)
three littleBits Workshop Sets to use with students identified for high-ability learner services and three HP Chromebook 11 G3 laptops, to use in conjunction with the kits. As we continue to build upon the implementation, we will incorporate more coding and the use of the Chromebooks to extend our littleBits experiences.

By utilizing the littleBits™ tools, the impact on student learning expanded beyond the classroom. Students become scientists discovering information; personifying what it is like to research, test, engineer, and think at a complex level. These sets provided the tools for the active engagement our students need to internalize learning by collaborating and creating solutions for real-world problems. Students utilized technology, science, and math skills while engineering their solutions, as well as skills from other content areas. Literacy skills improved as students documented the process and their attempts to solve problems. Listening and speaking were essential for communication and teamwork. Students had to be innovative, creative, and original when constructing their designs.

Students were motivated and engaged throughout this process. As we continue with implementation, students continue to generate ideas of how to use the littleBits and are eager to start designing and creating again.

Lise Wagner, Burke High School

Digital Classroom: $4,980

The Digital Classroom has been very successful thus far! We are fostering and therefore increasing student creativity and engagement, writing proficiency advancement, critical

thinking, digital citizenship, and career/college readiness through the use of tablet technology. The tablets are being used to increase student achievement in many areas including, though not limited to writing skills, communication, problem solving, and research fluency.

The tablet technology is enabling me, as an educator, to provide higher quality differentiation, cooperative learning environments, and more effective writing workshops. A baseline of student proficiency and stakeholder perceptions has been established through writing assessment and surveys and will be revisited again at the end of the school year. We are having a significant impact on student achievement in the area of writing, as well as college and career readiness as perceived by all stakeholders (parents and students, alike). ❖

(Better, continued from page 1)
has continually grown in spite of tough economic times for all schools. In fact, we hope to have 3,000 people at the CenturyLink Center Omaha this year. That would be around 1,000 more than ten short years ago. That your districts entrust the conference with their precious financial resources is something we do not take lightly. We have been better working together with our members to reach the NETA mission.

As I move from President to Past President during NETA 2016, I hope the move toward NETA working with your districts and organizations continues to evolve and grow. The kids we serve deserve the best learning environments possible, which will only happen by all of us working together. ❖

ISTE 2016 in Denver
NETA Registration Options

PLAN NOW to attend ISTE 2016 on June 26-29, 2016 at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver. Join more than 16,000 educators from across the United States and several foreign countries to attend the largest educational technology conference of its type in the U.S.

To register for the ISTE Conference, please go to *http://netasite.org* and click on the link for **ISTE 2016**. If you have any questions about registration for ISTE 2016, please contact Julie Moore at 402-540-1904 (*executivedirector@ netasite.org*) ❖

Digging Digital Portfolios: Seesaw and Weebly

Jeanette Carlson
Bellevue Public Schools

PORTFOLIOS ARE not a new concept, even digital portfolios are not a new concept, but the tools to create and build a portfolio have come a long way. There are numerous ways to use portfolios in the classroom and a number of different tools to create them. After presenting at a few conferences last week on digital portfolios and some of the tools available to create them, I came to the conclusion that there are two that I believe offer some great options: Seesaw and Weebly. Each one has unique qualities and each can be used within different ways.

Before jumping in and having students begin setting up their portfolio, it is important to determine your "Why". Why do you want your students to create portfolios? Who is the audience? How do you want it to shape their learning? Next, determine what type of portfolio you would like to have students create. Here are four types of portfolios that you might consider.

Process/Developmental Portfolios

This type of portfolio documents learning along the way. It lends itself to peer review/editing, revisions and the process of learning. It is great to use for giving feedback and "watching" your students learn.

Best Works/Showcase Portfolios

Different than the portfolio above, this type is a collection of the student's highest level of achievement. With this type of portfolio you don't see the learning take place, you see the end product after it has been reviewed and revised. (An Example of Portfolio Assignments may be found by going to the following link: *https://www.smore.com/hk99d)*

Assessment Portfolio

Yet another option, assessment portfolios, document what the student learned based on specific outcomes/objectives. These are very specific in what the teacher may be looking for and assessing.

Unit/Project Portfolio

The fourth option allows the teacher to have students create a portfolio for one or two units or projects created in class. For example, a senior research paper in English class or the habitat unit in elementary science.

Once you have your why and your type of portfolio determined, it's time to get started. Below are two wonderful options to try out with your students.

Seesaw

Seesaw is both app-based and web-based. It allows students to upload audio, video, photos, images, writing and artifacts from a variety of apps (See the compatible apps here: *http://bit.ly/1WV4S73).* Students as young as kindergarten can easily navigate the app. Seesaw is unique in that students do not have to have logins, they log in by scanning a QR code. No QR code on your iPad? No worries, you don't need one, Seesaw has a built in scanner. If desired, students can like classmate uploads and comment on them to give feedback and feedforward. Teachers are also using Seesaw to provide feedback to individual students through comment or voice/video recording.

Another plus of Seesaw is the ability to share the portfolios with parents. Parents can sign up for free and get notifications through e-mail or a mobile device when students add work. You can easily add a co-teacher and create folders in the app also. Don't worry if you aren't a 1:1 classroom, there are many ideas for using Seesaw in classes with one device or a garden of devices. Seesaw is being used in K–12 grade classrooms.

Weebly

Weebly is a website builder that has been around for a while. It is one of the easiest builders to use with its drag and drop interface. Secondary students like that it gives you the freedom to customize your website but the process isn't overwhelming. Sites can be created very quickly and be up and running in no time. Weebly allows students to upload and share text, audio, video, images, buttons and more. One of the great features of Weebly it that it has a blog component. So, students can add a blog page to their website to use for reflection of their learning and they don't need to create a completely different site. With an educator account you can have up to 40 free student accounts that allows for a little more control.

As I stated before, portfolio creation is not new. Sometimes taking a look at a few of the different tools available, refocusing on your why and determining the type of portfolio you want your students to create will give you a different perspective. Go ahead, give it a try! ❖

FETC 2016
JANUARY 12-15
ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER
ORLANDO, FL

FETC Takeaways
Reports from NETA Board members

In mid-January, NETA Board members Lucas Bingham, Jackie Ediger, Kent Steen and Lynne Herr attended FETC (Future of Education Technology Conference) in Orlando. Reshma Saujani, an Indian-American lawyer and politician who is the founder of the tech organization Girls Who Code, presented the conference opening keynote. With a renewed emphasis on K–12 coding instruction, it was especially exciting to hear about the 7-week summer immersion program Reshma and her team have developed to teach girls skills ranging from algorithms to robotics, expose them to presentations and projects designed by female engineers and entrepreneurs and develop mentorships between female technology leaders and participants.

Some other great tech tools and tips we heard about through breakout sessions included:

YT Full Fill Chrome Extension—share YouTube videos with no ads, comments or "up next" videos surrounding the screen. With YT Full Fill, your link shows only the video window.

Permission Click—a free, online tool to digitize the parent permission slip process. Teachers and administrators were raving about this tool to better

record and manage parent permission for field trips, handbook receipt, payment of fines, etc.

Creative Coding through Games and Apps—this is a free, introductory programming course for secondary grades. It is designed to reach a broad range of students, including those who may have never before considered programming. Students learn how to code by using TouchDevelop to design, program and publish mobile apps and games. Any teacher, regardless of computer science background, can teach the course. It can be taught via any modern web browser on phones, tablets, laptops or desktop computers. Course length is flexible, requiring 6, 9, 12 or 18 weeks, depending on the time available in your school.

Breakout EDU—one of the benefits of attending conferences is the ability to spend time with friends from across the state and learn from each other. We were thrilled to learn

about Breakout EDU from Lynne Herr. We also enjoyed the experience of trying out our teamwork, communication, and problem solving skills at *Escapology*—an escape room in Orlando. Breakout EDU will be available to learn about this year at the NETA Spring Conference.

Beyond the Bubble—this is a website for all things Social Sciences and primary sources. It is the mission of the Library of Congress to provide content that promotes use of the Library's resources and offer access to educational resources. Great site—check it out!

Storybird—Students in grades K–9 create books, stories or poems. Storybird starts with incredible pictures to jumpstart student writing. The creative walls are broken down by the artwork that inspires student stories. As a fundraiser, students/parents can buy their stories in hardback/paperback too, with the classroom getting 30% of the profit. ❖

BEYOND the BUBBLE — A new generation of history assessments

Assessments   Approach   About   Contact

Assessing 21st Century Skills with Library of Congress Documents.

1) Multiple-choice questions teach kids:
A. they can be right for the wrong reasons.
B. to skip hard problems after 10 seconds.
C. if in doubt, choose C.
D. all of the above.

History Assessments of Thinking

WATCH HOW IT WORKS ▶

Jeffrey Bernadt
Bellevue Public Schools

7 Reasons
to Use Instructional Videos in Your Classroom

EVER WONDERED how you could create a situation in which you were in multiple places at one time within the classroom? The power of technology opens up possibilities for teachers to do just that! One of the best examples is taking advantage of the ability to create and share instructional videos with your students.

Here are seven reasons why you should be using instructional videos in your classroom.

① Students Work at their Own Pace

One of the most powerful aspects of having students watch instructional videos is they can learn at their own pace. Allowing students to pause, rewind, and even fast forward instruction provides students control and ownership over their learning. Not only can they control the video, they can also adjust the speed of the narration. This helps in comprehension.

② Students Choose the Time & Place

Creating instructional videos allows your students the opportunity to choose when and where they learn. Although you may require students to watch the videos before coming to class as homework or doing during class itself, the choice is there for both the teacher and the student. In addition, the student can always go back and view the videos while working on homework or studying for the tests. Having instructional videos also support students when they can't be in the classroom, for example, home sick or out of town with family. With the increase in mobile devices students and teachers have way more freedom on when and where learning takes place.

③ More One on One Teacher Student Interaction

Teachers often assume that by creating instructional videos they will lose their interaction with students and that their relationships with students will diminish. In my experience the opposite is true. First, students are still hearing your voice in the videos and it is more personal as you are talking directly to them. Second, as students plug into your instructional video, you have just digitally cloned yourself, which means you are now free to work with students individually or in small groups. Now instead of talking to the whole class you are able to have individual conversations with students that are more personal and powerful.

④ Frees Up Classroom Time

Whether you have the students view the video before they come to class or during class, instructional videos actually create more class time for guided practice and other learning activities. A lecture that may normally take 15–30 minutes of class time can be easily condensed into a 3–10 minute instructional video. This happens because during whole class lectures teachers generally get students actively involved through question and discussion strategies. Taking whole class lectures out and focusing on the skills and content being taught reduces the length of guided instruction dramatically when put into video format.

⑤ Open New Opportunities

Not only does instructional videos create more classroom time, but they open up new learning opportunities in the classroom. Class time can be restructured, whether the class be broken into stations or more choice is embedded into the classroom. Simply put, teachers have more freedom to create new learning activities because they are no longer tied to the front of the room doing whole class instruction.

⑥ Provides Support to Parents

One of my favorite parts of creating instructional videos is the support that it provides parents. Parents are given the help they need to support their children at home by now having access to the same learning their child is given. I am amazed how many parents actually watched the videos with their students or on their own. Some want to be able to better help their children study while others simply want to learn.

⑦ Provides Support to Special Education

In the same way it provides extra support to parents it can do the same for other teachers and support staff within the school. Special education teachers appreciate the instructional videos because they now had access to the same information, and therefore, can better support the students in their learning. Now paraprofessionals, special education teachers, and even study hall teachers can better serve and support their students. ❖

Lynne Herr
ESU 6

"*The war is at its peak and Nazi Germany is continuing to bomb London. The only way for Great Britain to get an idea of what's going to happen next is for the team of codebreakers to decipher the encrypted messages from Germany. Are you up for decoding the war?*"

"*The Mad Engineer is up to his old tricks! This time he is threatening to wipe out everyone's bank accounts and use the money for future evil deeds unless you prove you have what it takes to complete his challenge. It's up to you to put the Mad Engineer in his place and foil his dastardly plan!*"

Thanks to a new inquiry-based learning model, Breakout EDU, students across the globe enter their classrooms to be presented with scenarios like these from two Breakout EDU games: Decoding the War and The Mad Engineer Heist. Created and freely shared by teachers, Breakout EDU games incorporate the clue gathering and adrenaline-fueled problem solving of escape rooms with the opportunity for students of all ages to practice their listening skills, teamwork and leadership, all while building content knowledge and skill.

Founded by James Sanders, a former middle school math teacher, current Director of Innovation for the EdTechTeam and co-founder of Future Ready Schools, Breakout EDU meets flexible learning goals focused around the "4 Cs" from the 21st Century Schools Model: critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity.

Break Into Engaged Learning with
Breakout EDU

All teachers need to get started with Breakout EDU, is a lockable container, a few different types of locks, and an invisible ink pen and UV flashlight that can be ordered from the BreakoutEDU.com web site, purchased through online lists available for Amazon or picked up at local home improvement stores. (See below). Teachers will find over 70 games created and freely shared by teachers through the BreakoutEDU.com web site, covering Pre-K–college, and all content areas. More games are created and shared each week by teachers from around the world! Breakout EDU offers an incentive plan for teachers who create and share games to earn free game resources such as additional boxes and locks, so new games are added to the community every week.

NETA will feature Bellevue teacher Michelle Boyce leading a presentation about Breakout EDU in the classroom right after the Thursday morning general session. After Michelle's session, NETA attendees will have the opportunity to sign up to experience a Breakout EDU game for themselves through our Breakout EDU at the CenturyLink Center Omaha. One lucky winner will walk away with a Breakout EDU kit ready to use in your classroom! Sharae Geldes and Jennifer Manning will also present a poster session on Breakout EDU from Two Springs Elementary, Bellevue Public Schools, on Friday at 1:15 p.m.

How to learn more about Breakout EDU:
- Join the Breakout EDU Facebook group to connect with other educators.
- Go to the Breakout EDU web site (*http://www.breakoutedu.com/*) and fill out the form in Step 2 of the Getting Started link. Once you submit the form, you'll receive a message with the password to view the games on the site. Games are password protected to maintain the integrity of the clues from Google searching students!

- At *BreakoutEDU.com*, explore the published games and "Sandbox Games." Published games are vetted games that follow a standard setup format, including a video to help you set up the game in your classroom. Sandbox Games are teacher created and shared informally, primarily through the Facebook group, and are organized in a Google Drive folder for easy access.

- Build or buy a box and gather some locks to use the games with your colleagues and students. Want to get started right NOW? See this list of items on Amazon (*http://bit.ly/1p9e63t*) you could be ready to go in two days with Prime shipping. ❖

Michelle Boyce's students playing World of Geometry game

Communicating and Connecting

*Patty Wolfe
Cozad
Community
Schools*

"The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place."
~George Bernard Shaw

WHEN WE WANT TO visit with friends and family, we usually grab our phone and call or send a message. But what about when we need to communicate with students, colleagues, parents, community, and other educators? As educators, we have the need to connect with so many different groups. We must find the best way to do this with each group and unfortunately, not all groups' use the same type of communication tools! We have so many choices today—text, imessage, email, Google chats, hangouts, Twitter, Facebook, messenger, etc. These are all great tools but they are only useful if you can reach your targeted audience. Listed here are some of the tools I am currently using for communication and how I use them. Hopefully, you will find at least one of these to be useful also!

Slack is probably one of my most favorite "new" tools. Slack is a messaging app for teams. What I like most about Slack is the ability to organize the team conversations into open channels. Channels can be created for topics, teams, or anything that you want to discuss. Private channels and direct messaging are also available. Our district has recently begun to use the free version of Slack and it is amazing the dialogue and channels that have been created. Users can use slack as an ios app, chrome app, or website. I find this tool most useful to collaborate and discuss upcoming issues and topics with staff in our

district. We also use it to share our blog posts and school twitter feed. For more information, go to *https://slack.com/*

Bloomz is a new tool that we have recently begun using with our elementary staff. It is a great tool to connect with parents. Bloomz lets our teachers share information and photos. Our teachers used Bloomz to schedule Parent Teacher Conferences. This service lets teachers send invites to parents for conferences and parents then can sign up for the time slot that best fits their schedule. Bloomz also connects parents and classrooms with reminders and class calendars. We are using this service school wide so not only are parents a member of a specific class but the elementary community. At this time, Bloomz is in beta, and we are using this service at no cost. Our teachers love the features of posts, announcements, private communication, and sign ups for events and volunteers. For more information, visit *http://bloomz.net/*.

Many of you have heard of **voxer** but if you haven't, this is a great tool to connect and collaborate with others. Voxer is a "walkie-talkie" app for smartphones (however, you can log in on a computer also) that lets you send voice messages. You are not limited to voice, you can also send text, images, links, and videos. I use voxer to connect with different

Professional Learning Groups that are a vital part of my own professional growth. Any time I have a specific question or need help with something, I choose one of my voxer groups and send it out. Almost immediately I will get a response to help me solve my issue. Even though I have used voxer mainly to connect with others outside of my district, it is a great tool for our staff to use when we are attending a conference. We always use it for NETA & ISTE to communicate with the group of attendees. By creating a voxer group, we can find each other, share information we learned, or just plan where we are meeting. Voxer is a must for your group at this year's NETA conference! For more information on voxer, visit *http://voxer.com/*.

One of the hardest groups to communicate with is our students! We all know that they don't check their email! Students have figured out what works best for them to communicate with each other—social media! They communicate through messages, tweets, and snaps. It becomes a little trickier when I need to communicate with a group of our students. I put it on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, but I am not assured it will reach each one of them. One tool that has helped with communicating to a group of students is **Remind**. Remind lets me send messages to students without having their cell phone numbers or

(Communicating, continued) giving them my number. I use remind to send out quick notifications and reminders and know it is safe. Many schools are beginning to use a Learning Management System (LMS) such as Canvas or Schoology and it has also made communication easier between student and teacher. However, if you really want to reach a wide group of students, tell your story on Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat! For more information on Remind visit *https://www.remind.com/*.

For our district, **Facebook** and **Twitter** are still our best tools to reach our community and parents. Many parents are already using these social media tools so it only makes sense to use a platform they are familiar with. Parents love photos and both of these tools allow you to convey your message with photos or text.

No School at Cozad Community Schools Tuesday, February 2, 2016, due to weather.
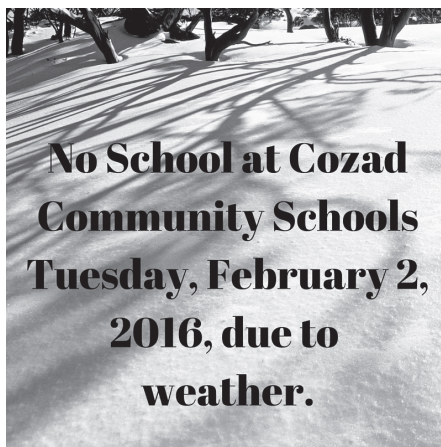
Messages placed in photos seem to reach more parents and these image updates are being shared more frequently.

Tools like **canva** (*https://www.canva.com/*) make it very easy to place a message into an image and instantly post on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. It is also very important to use your school hashtag and promote the hashtag in a variety of ways.

There are so many ways to communicate today and the ways and tools are changing rapidly. What works today may not be here tomorrow. Even though I use all of the services I listed here, I still connect through other tools such as Instagram, Google, and basic email.

I am even learning to communicate through **Snapchat** because that is what our teens prefer. I am not debating the importance of face-to-face communication nor am I saying these methods should replace physical voice communication—however, I know that we have to go to where the audience is. As educators, we have to find what works the best to communicate with our parents, colleagues, students, community, and professional learning network. We also need to realize that we need to be flexible and change as the modes change... and they will. ❖

The Winners!

Complete Judging Results of NETA Student and Teacher Contests
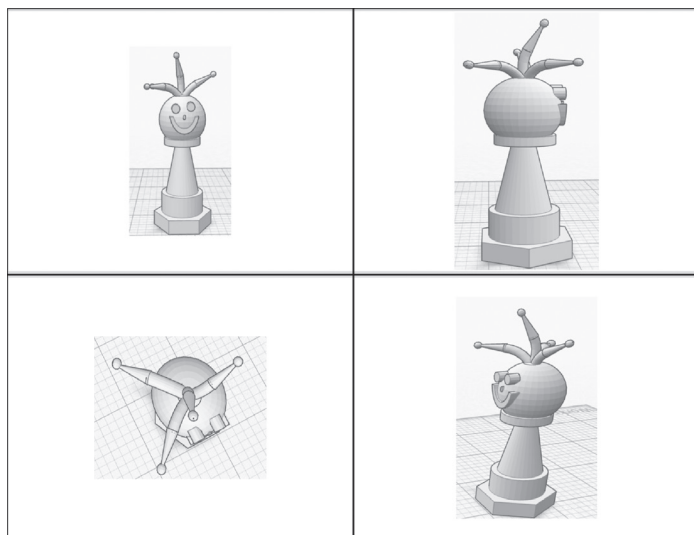
◄ **Grades 3-5 Still Images**
1st Place—by Hazzard Eilts and Kaden Kuusela, Dodge Elementary School

Grades 6-8 Still Images ▶
1st Place (tie)—by Kara Barnhart, Garden County Jr./Sr. High

▲ **Grades 6-8 Still Images**
1st Place (tie)—by Madi Leach ,Garden County Jr./Sr. High
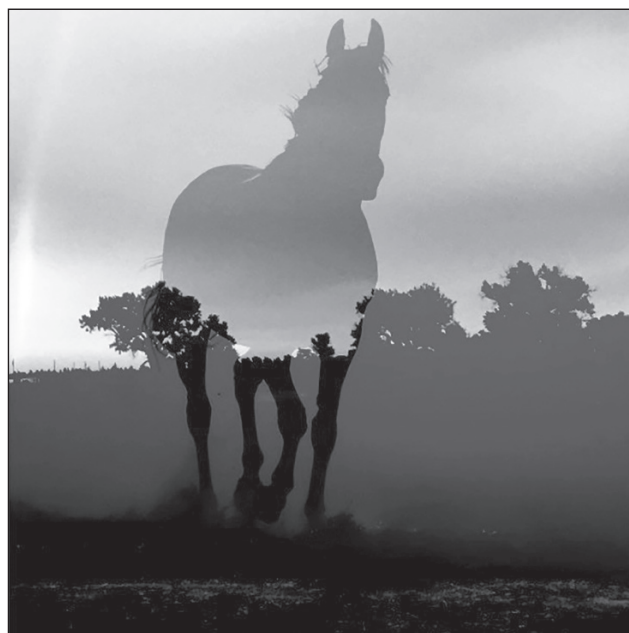
Still Images, Grades 3-5

1st—Hazzard Eilts and Kaden Kuusela, Dodge Elementary School, *Joker Game Piece*, Sponsor: Judith Benner

2nd—Jacob Albers, Gates Elementary, *Looking Up*, Sponsor: Whitney Martin

3rd—Hailey Jakubowski, Gates Elementary, *Fall Colors*, Sponsor: Jennifer Nelson

Still Images, Grades 6-8

1st (tie)—Kara Barnhart, Garden County Jr./Sr. High, *Hold your Horses*, Sponsor: Cody Assmann

1st (tie)—Madi Leach, Garden County Jr./Sr. High, *The Watering House*, Sponsor: Cody Assmann

(Contest winners, continued)

Hannah Rowell

▲ **Grades 9-12 Still Images**
1st Place—by Hannah Rowell, Fremont High School

Still Images, Grades 9-12

1st—Hannah Rowell, Fremont High School, *Avatar Yourself*, Sponsor: Kristen Strickler

2nd—Selena Ramires, Thayer Central Community Schools, *Dawn*, Sponsor: Stephanie Lanik

3rd—Cambrie Cottam, Thayer Central Community Schools, *Leonard the Squirrel*, Sponsor: Stephanie Lanik

Still Images, (Pre-service teacher)

1st—Shelby Quinn and Danielle Herstad, Concordia University, Nebraska, *Digital Citizenship Poster Series*, at *https://goo.gl/urDBNp* Sponsor: Peter Landry

Interactive Media, Grades 3-5

1st—Thatcher Panowicz & James Space, Dodge Elementary, *Wumbers of the World*, Sponsor: Jan Tell

2nd—Amy Oltman, Bellevue Elementary School, *Figurative Language*, Sponsor: Monica Evon

3rd—Mrs. Meyer's Class: Tavis Galindo (technician), Louis Kuku (technician), Sydney Lane (technician), Jimmy Barrientess, Caleb Dowty, Kenzi Edwards, Eli Ewoldt, Jazlyn Favela Samantha Fenton, Merely Garcia, Isaiah Knoch, Chloe Mealy, Ariel Mejia Aguilera, Ashley Nelson, Fernanda Perea, Samuel Rodriquez Chavez, Hector Romero Zamarripa, Awal Wariyo; Dodge Elementary School, *QR Crayon Counselors*, Sponsor: Shellie Meyer

Interactive Media, Grades 6-8

1st—Sydney Schildt and Maddie Wittstruck, Milford Junior Senior High School, *"That Summer"* Website, Sponsor: Megan Seibel

2nd—Bailey Brooks, Westridge Middle School, *Solar System Tour*, Sponsor: Chad Ackerson

Interactive Media, Pre-service teacher

1st—Alicia Royuk, Concordia University, Nebraska, *Poe and Literary Devices*, Sponsor: Peter Landrey

2nd—Erika Borslien, Concordia University, Nebraska, *How to Become a Better Musician*, Sponsor: Peter Landrey

3rd—Anyssa Neustel, Concordia University, Nebraska, *Deciphering the Founding Documents*, Sponsor: Peter Landrey

Audio

1st—Abby M. Schneckloth, Westridge Middle School, *Walk Through the Fun House*, Sponsor: Julie Sackschewsky

2nd—Anai Torres, Westridge Middle School, *Bright—Solar System*, Sponsor: Chad Ackerson

Video, Grades PreK-2

1st—Cooper Dubbs, Centura Elementary School, *I'm Unique Like a Snowflake*, Sponsor: Kim Steffen

2nd—KyAnna Brand, Corbin Burgess, Ayden Christensen, Kennedy Davis, Cooper Dubbs, Wyatt Dvorak, Claire Knuth, Lillian Lehman, Karsyn Lemburg, Blake Myers, Maggie Myers, Josephina Schroeder, Alex Solis Jr., Leighton Weaver, Kasen Webb, Anthony Zuniga; Centura Elementary School, *What's the Word*, Sponsor: Kim Vieth

Video, Grades 3-5

1st—Kenzie Melcher and Derek Jackson, Bellevue Elementary School, *Mystery Hangouts—Making Global Connections*, Sponsor: Monica Evon

Video, Grades 6-8

1st—Grace Ochsner, Molly Rankin, Lauryn Turner, Kailey Walsh, Cam Busenbark; Wildewood Elementary, *Green Screen PSA*, Sponsor: Corrie Suhr

2nd—Jack Swanson, Westside Middle School, *Paper Guy and The Magic Pencil* Stop Motion Movie, Sponsor: Kristeen Shabram

3rd—Myah Brown, Westridge Middle School, *Erode It Off*, Sponsor: Chad Ackerson

Video, Grades 9-12

1st—Coleman Cooper, Northwest High School, *Grandpa Retires*, Sponsor: Colleen Childers

2nd—Hannah Adams, Jose Ramirez, Madalyn Roth, Centura Public School, *A Day Full of FFA*, Sponsor: John Hadenfeldt

3rd—James Wassinger, Mackenna Hunt, Lexi Crawford, Logan Becker, Jacob Kramer, and Alicia Joppa; Southern Valley Schools, *Nebraska: Many Views, All Unique*, Sponsor: Meredith McQuay

Excellence in Teaching with Technology Award

THE PURPOSE of the Excellence in Teaching with Technology Award is to recognize and honor an individual who has demonstrated outstanding achievement in implementing technology to improve teaching and learning. This year's winner is **Jason Rushing**.

Congratulations to **Jason Rushing**, recognized as the 2016 NETA Excellence in Teaching with Technology award winner. Jason is a highly respected teacher and technology leader in Lincoln Public Schools, where he teaches K–5 computer science and technology at Humann Elementary School. He is the author of "Create, Connect, Inspire," a popular blog where he shares lessons and resources with blog readers from all over the world. He served on the NETA board for more than eight years.

Gena Licata, Principal at Humann Elementary School, notes that because of Jason's dedication, "Our students are engaged in meaningful, challenging instruction related to technology and computer science. All students have had experience with coding, critical thinking skills, and problem solving."

Dr. Kent Steen, Curriculum Specialist for Computer Science at Lincoln Public Schools, former NETA president and current board member, calls Jason the "definition of innovation," and says he is "an exemplary teacher who is passionate about the experiences that he provides for his students." Dr. Steen says Jason excels in creative lesson planning and shares his creativity with other teachers. He also shares that Jason's character serves as a role model for colleagues and students. "Jason is a person of integrity and treats others in the way he wants to be treated. Jason is accepting of others and dedicates himself daily to the meeting the needs of his students."

According to Pam Krambeck, past NETA president, secretary and board member, "Jason has led by being among the finest examples of a teacher who understands that teaching is about relationships and learning. Jason is an extraordinary role model to teachers in his building and those he meets when presenting across the state. His quick smile, patience and the fun atmosphere he creates for learning gravitate other educators to his circle where everyone is welcome and everyone walks away with confidence to try something new with technology."

Congratulations, Jason! We're honored to recognize you at the Spring Conference! ❖

ISTE Trek Winners
Matthew Clemens, Norris Elementary School, *Matt Clemens ISTE Trek 2016 Submission* ($1,800)

Jill Domina, Schuyler Community Schools, *ISTE Trek 2016* ($1,800)

Abby Fitzgerald, Bennington Public Schools, *Let Me Go!— A Parody* ($1,800)

Lacie Wright, Southern Valley Schools, *Thoughts on Technology— ISTE 2016* ($1,800)

Teacher Grant Awards
Derek Babb, Omaha North High School, *High School-Elementary School Robotic Collaboration*, Using Dash and Dot robots, high school introductory computer science students will teach elementary students how to program. ($1,499.90)

Eric Langhorst, Liberty Public Schools, *Discovering Drones at Discovery Middle School*, The grant will allow Discovery Middle School to purchase a drone to be used by both the technology class and the student broadcasting class to learn to use the drone as a tool to capture unique and impactful video. ($1,408)

Paul Timm, Lyons-Decatur Northeast, *Avian Education, Conservation, and Ecology Project (year 1)*, The project is a collaboration between Lyons-Decatur, Allen, and Norfolk Public Schools to utilize birds as a focal point around which students can apply their understanding of Biology and Ecology. ($1,481.88)

Becky Miller, Laurel-Concord-Coleridge School, *Kid Power 4 Kids*, The Kid Power 4 Kids Project is designed around the UNICEF Kid Power Band. Students will wear their UNICEF Kid Power Band (child-friendly fitness band) to see how many steps they can take each day to get students to be more active. ($1,500)

Congratulations and Thanks!
Congratulations to all contest winners for submitting high-quality entries. In some cases, the choices were very difficult. Thanks so much to everyone who gave their free time to judge all the contests, and to those of you who entered or sponsored contest entries not listed among the winners. ❖

NETA Judging Reflections
(Blog post from February 13, 2016)

Charissa Widman, Lincoln Public Schools

LAST SATURDAY, I had the opportunity to participate as a guest judge for NETA contests with the NETA board. Each person that I met was incredibly welcoming and both open and respectful while listening to ideas. It was an honor to have the chance to experience productive struggle with many of my personal celebrities as we judged a broad variety of grant and contest submissions. I left with many take-aways, and after a week of reflection, will attempt to explain my thoughts.

I began on a committee that was judging teacher submissions for NETA Grants. As someone who has considered submitting a grant, this was a unique opportunity. In this category, there were many well-planned submissions, so our committee found it difficult to narrow it down to three winners. One thing that stood out about the winners was that their projects utilized networking across districts, ages, and countries. Not only did the projects connect to state standards, they provided the chance for students to grow into digital citizens as they participated in the projects. I am excited to follow these teachers and watch for their results next year at NETA.

After judging a wide variety of interactive media and still images from students from K–12, I found that I was left with a few questions. Although there were some categories that had many strong submissions, there were others that had few submissions and some that did not fit the criteria for judging. I continue to wonder about the underlying reasons for the lack of submissions. It is possible that teachers are unaware of the contests or some categories are not as relevant with current technology and state standards, but I wonder if there are larger underlying reasons.

As a classroom teacher who has not submitted student work, the main reason is fear that my students' work is not high enough quality. I have many digital student products, but I am not confident submitting most into contests. Any time I complete digital projects with students, I feel that we are on a time crunch to get back to the "real" work of prepping for assessments. As a result, our projects do not typically receive the time, feedback from a diverse audience, or polishing that I feel they deserve. Maybe I am over-complicating things and I just need to be brave and submit work, but this is where I am at right now. I wonder if other teachers struggle with this problem as they navigate the ever-changing balancing act of achieving favorable test results and providing real learning opportunities for students, where individuals can shine.

My final observation after judging with the NETA board is how inspired I felt after a few hours of interaction with like-minded professionals. I left feeling recharged and excited about my role as a teacher. The NETA board members are passionate about education and are not afraid to push themselves and others outside of their comfort zones to do what is best for students—to participate in giving students the tools and authentic opportunities they need to become responsible digital citizens that possess an understanding of how to use technology to make the world a better place to live. With this goal in mind, I have spent the past week working on projects, researching, and participating in twitter chats. I am more determined than ever to take advantage of my role as a teacher leader in the area of educational technology, and can't wait to see what the next few months hold as I continue this process.

Contest submission tips
If you are a teacher and have considered submitting a NETA grant or student contest, here are a few tips that I would share:

NETA Grants
- Research the technology that you are requesting
- Clearly explain the timeline and budget and include links to applicable websites
- Narrow down your topic and make a well-defined request
- Choose a project that is unique and could truly be enhanced with the requested technology
- Think big picture: How will your project impact students now and in the future?
- Bonus: Find ways to collaborate between grade levels, schools, or districts

NETA Contests
- Choose 1–3 of your best student projects to submit
- Find a contest category that best fits your student-created projects
- Submit projects that show depth of learning
- Share NETA contests with your colleagues to increase awareness!
- Submit! ❖

Daily Agendas Using Google Docs

Melissa Pilakowski, Valentine High School

EACH ONE OF my classes has a daily agenda. It's the single go-to place for announcements, links, and plans for the day/week. In the past, I've tried lots of shiny technology, including a class blog, Google Classroom, and online lesson planners that publish to the web. They all came with benefits and drawbacks. I kept looking for something more efficient for my students and me.

For me, the answer came in the simplest and plainest place: *Google Docs*. After watching some webinars on creating flipped/blended learning lessons in Google Docs, I realized that would work great for daily agendas, too.

This year I started using tables in Google Docs, and I *love* it.

Here's why my classes' daily agendas and Google Docs work so well together:

1. Central Location
It's the one place I can guarantee will have information students need. Assessment dates, links to assignments, even announcements for the senior class. I ask that student's bookmark the daily agenda to make it easy to access for them.

2. Time Saver
Every day we have absent students. Now, all I have to tell them is "check the daily agenda and let me know if you have questions." When students are planning to be gone for basketball games or field trips for other classes, I say the same thing: "Check the daily agenda."

3. Easy Adjustment
I've used blogs and websites for daily agendas before, and they've worked fine–except when I've had to make adjustments to the agenda. And to be honest, I have to make adjustments often. I realize I've forgotten an announcement. I've thought of another resource for students. To make these changes in a website requires lots of clicks to get into the post, to edit it, to republish it. In a Google Doc, I can make a quick edit in a few seconds. It's a true living document that changes throughout the day.

4. Easy Commenting
Blogs and websites allow for student comments, but viewing them involves scrolling and clicking. In a Google Doc (that is set to "Comment Only"), students can highlight part of the agenda and make a comment–perhaps a question they have or a resource they've found that could help others. Then the comments are attached directly to the part of the agenda it refers to.

5. Hyperlinks
Granted I can't embed videos or websites into Google Docs (although I dream that one day I'll be able to…), but I can link anything. Assignments in Google Classroom, YouTube videos, websites–you name it.

6. Compacted Interface
What I mean is being able to access and scan a lot of information in a small area. For this reason (and reason #3) is why I choose Google Docs over Google Classroom for classroom agendas. Nearly all my above reasons can be accomplished with Google Classroom (which I also use), but want to look at the week at a glance? It's a no-go. There's scrolling through announcements and assignments. In Google Docs, I make one table for each week, put the date at the top, and change the color of the table each week.

7. Flexibility of Tables
My life changed when "Merge cells" was added to Google Docs. As my teaching pedagogy changes, so do my tables. Currently, I'm shifting to a more student-paced classroom and eventually plan to be fully quest-based learning. With the ability to merge cells, I can create "weekly plans & announcements" in a side column, then cells for each day on the right. Columns could be created for matching up the standards or student resources, too.

Still haven't found the right answer to your Class Announcement/Agenda page? Try Google Docs. For me, the answer was in the simplicity of Google Docs. ❖

Calendar of Technology Conferences & Seminars

Events of every type for educators, technicians & administrators

April 2016

CoSN's School Networking Conference

April 4–7, 2016
Washington D.C.
www.cosn.org/events/

National School Boards Association (NSBA)

April 9–11, 2016
Boston, MA
annualconference.nsba.org

NETA Spring Conference
Embrace Your Passion

April 21–22, 2016
CenturyLink Center
Omaha, NE
netasite.org

May 2016

United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA)

May 10–12, 2016
St. Louis, MO
http://www.usdla.org

June 2016

Nebraska Career Education Conference (NCE)

June 6–9, 2016
Younes Conference Center
Kearney, NE
nceconference.com

Innovative Education Colorado (InnEdCO)

June 12–15, 2016
Keystone, CO
innedco.org

ISTE Conference
Education Transformation Starts Here

June 26–29, 2016
Denver, CO
www.iste.org

July 2016

Great Plains Summit
featuring Google

July 14–15, 2016
Southwest High School
Lincoln, NE
gpsummit.org

October 2016

Nebraska Fall Ed Tech Conference

October 6–7, 2016
Younes Conference Center
Kearney, NE
fall.netasite.org

iNACOL (International Assoc. for K-12 Online Learning)

October 25–28, 2016
San Antonio, TX
www.inacol.org

January 2017

Future of Educational Technology Conference (FETC)

January 24–27, 2017
Orange County Convention Ctr,
Orlando, FL
fetc.org

February 2017

Texas Computer Education Association (TCEA)

February 6–10, 2017
Austin, TX
www.tceaconvention.org/2017/

June 2017

ISTE Conference

June 26–29, 2017
San Antonio, TX
website not yet available

NETA
Nebraska Educational Technology Association
PO Box 484
Gretna, NE 68028

Membership Form

NETA Statement of Purpose: *The Nebraska Educational Technology Association exists for the purpose of providing leadership and promoting the application of technology to the educational process. Its span of interest includes all levels and aspects of education.*

Name _____ Position _____

Preferred Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

School/Agency Name _____ Email _____

If you attended the Spring Conference in April 2016, your membership is included with your registration. You will receive a printed newsletter. If you would like to receive a printed newsletter, but did not attend the Spring Conference, you may pay $35 for a printed September, November, February and April newsletter. Make checks payable to NETA. To become a member, please fill out the above form and mail with check to:

NETA Membership
PO Box 484
Gretna, NE 68028

❏ I am a new member
❏ I was recruited by this current NETA member

_____

Address changes should be sent to the above address or emailed to: *executivedirector@netasite.org*