

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION - 2024
COMMITTEE STATEMENT
LB1284

Hearing Date: Tuesday February 06, 2024
Committee On: Education
Introducer: Walz
One Liner: Provide for a statewide computer science education expansion program

Roll Call Vote - Final Committee Action:
Advanced to General File with amendment(s)

Vote Results:

Aye: 8 Senators Albrecht, Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Murman, Sanders, Walz, Wayne
Nay:
Absent:
Present Not Voting:

Testimony:

Proponents:

Senator Lynne Walz
Shaun Young
Lashonna Dorsey

Laurel Oetken

Jane Erdenberger
Charles Riedesel

Colby Coash

Anthony Owen

Opponents:

Neutral:

Benjamin Burns

Representing:

Opening Presenter
Nebraska Department of Education
Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, Greater Omaha Chamber, Nebraska Tech Collaborative, Intern Nebraska, Powered by Aksarben
Tech Nebraska, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska Chambers Association
Omaha Public Schools
Beatrice Public Schools (Board Member), Schools Taking Action for Nebraska Children's Education
Nebraska Association of School Boards, Nebraska Rural Schools Association, Nebraska Council of School Administrators
Code.org

Representing:

Representing:

self

* ADA Accommodation Written Testimony

Summary of purpose and/or changes:

Bill Summary:



The State Department of Education is directed to establish a comprehensive statewide computer science education expansion program, providing training and support for teachers, integrating computer science into school programs, and aiding in the development of instructional plans aligned with academic standards.

The Department will hire specialists to ensure widespread teacher access to training.

An annual report on the program's details will be submitted, and a dedicated fund, fed by legislative transfers and external contributions, is created for computer science and technology education support.

\$1.5 million will be transferred annually from the General Fund, with an additional \$500,000 contingent on private matching funds, for the Computer Science and Technology Education Fund.

Section-by-Section Summary:

SECTION 1

79-3301 to 79-3005 and sections two and three of this act shall be known as the Computer Science and Technology Act.

SECTION 2

2.1

The State Department of Education is mandated to establish a statewide computer science education expansion program, encompassing training for teachers seeking supplemental computer science certification, support for the integration of computer science into elementary, middle, and high school instructional programs, and assistance for schools and teachers in developing computer science instructional plans aligned with the State Board of Education's academic content standards.

2.2

The State Department of Education is required to hire or contract with computer science specialists to create and deliver computer science educator training, ensuring reasonable access for every teacher in the state.

2.3

The State Department of Education is mandated to annually submit an electronic report to the Governor and the Legislature Clerk, detailing the statewide computer science education expansion program, including the number and format of training opportunities, the quantity of teachers trained, information on teacher certifications or endorsements in computer science, and the associated costs for the fiscal year.

SECTION 3

The Computer Science and Technology Education Fund, administered by the State Department of Education, is created to receive money from legislative transfers, federal funds, gifts, grants, or contributions, aimed at providing training and support in computer science and technology education, with the fund's available money being invested in accordance with state investment regulations.

The Legislature intends to transfer \$1.5 million from the General Fund for the fiscal year 2024-25 and 2025-26 to the Computer Science and Technology Education Fund for training and support.

Additionally, there is an intent to transfer an extra \$500,000 annually from the General Fund, contingent on matching private funds, with the State Department of Education providing notification for the state match trigger.

Explanation of amendments:

LB 964 Adopt the Special Education Teacher Forgivable Loan Program Act and provide for scholarships under the Nebraska Career Scholarship Act

Bill Summary:

The legislative proposal outlines two key education-related initiatives: the Special Education Teacher Forgivable Loan Program and the Nebraska Career Scholarship. The Forgivable Loan Program, administered by the Department of



Education, aims to support aspiring special education teachers by providing forgivable loans for in-state tuition. Eligible students enter a contract committing to teach in Nebraska schools, and upon compliance, the department forgives a portion of the loan annually, culminating in complete forgiveness after five years. Non-compliance may result in deferment or repayment. The Nebraska Career Scholarship, overseen by the Board of Regents, offers financial support to university students in designated programs, including special education. The scholarship covers tuition, fees, and related expenses, renewable annually for up to four years. The Board will report annually on program metrics. The legislation empowers the State Board of Education to establish rules for the Special Education Teacher Forgivable Loan Program.

Section-by-Section Summary:

SECTION 1

Names the bill.

SECTION 2

The Legislature acknowledges the challenges in filling essential positions, especially special education teachers, in Nebraska elementary and secondary schools, and expresses its intent to aid individuals pursuing special education teaching careers by providing forgivable loans to those who commit to teaching in Nebraska after obtaining their teacher certification with a special education endorsement.

SECTION 3 – DEFINITIONS

- Department
- Eligible Institution
- Eligible Noncitizen
- Eligible Student
- Teacher Education Program

SECTION 4

The Special Education Teacher Forgivable Loan Program is established, administered by the Department of Education, providing forgivable loans to eligible students for in-state tuition at recognized institutions. The department may award up to twenty-five forgivable loans per eligible institution annually. Eligible students, upon receiving a loan, enter a contract stipulating conditions, including teaching special education in a Nebraska school within one year of graduating for a specified period. Upon compliance, the department forgives twenty percent of the total loan amount per year, culminating in complete forgiveness after five years. Non-compliance may result in deferment or repayment with simple interest. Repayments go to the State Treasurer's General Fund. The department informs eligible students of their obligations under the contract.

SECTION 5

Authorizes the State Board of Education to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations relating to the Special Education Teacher Forgivable Loan Program Act.

SECTION 6

The Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska will award Nebraska Career Scholarships to eligible university students enrolled in specific programs of study, with amounts not exceeding \$10,000 or \$25,000 per year based on transfer status and test scores. The Board will allocate funds, determine student eligibility, process applications, and disperse funds. Eligible programs include those in mathematics, engineering, health care, computer information systems (until 2023-24), and, starting in 2024-25, those designated by the Department of Economic Development, including special education. Scholarship recipients must register for a Nebraska-based internship, apprenticeship, clinical position, or employment in a major-related field. The scholarship covers tuition, fees, tools, equipment, and room and board, renewable annually for up to four years. The Board will report annually on various program metrics



to the Legislature and the Governor.

Motion to amend LB 964 into AM 3061

Vote Results: 8-0

Voting Aye: Senators Albrecht, Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Murman, Sanders, Walz, Wayne

Voting Nay: None

Testifiers on LB 964

Proponents:

Introducer Senator George Dungan Legislative District 26

Megn Pitrat, Nebraska State Education Association

Spencer Head, Omaha Public Schools

Lisa Moody, Omaha Public Schools

Edison McDonald, The Arc of Nebraska

Opponents:

None

Neutral:

None

LB 985 Change provisions relating to grant eligibility under the Nebraska Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act

Bill Summary:

At present, in order to qualify for a high-need retention grant an applicant must obtain an endorsement in special education, mathematics, science, technology, or dual credit.

This bill adds the requirement that an applicant must also teach in one of the aforementioned subjects in order to qualify for a high-need retention grant.

Motion to amend LB 985 into AM 3061

Vote Results: 8-0

Voting Aye: Senators Albrecht, Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Murman, Sanders, Walz, Wayne

Voting Nay: None

Testifiers on LB 985

Proponents:

Introducer Senator Lou Ann Linehan Legislative District 39

Opponents:

None

Neutral:

None

LB 986 Terminate loan repayment assistance and provide grants to teachers under the Teach in Nebraska Today Act

Bill Summary:

The Teach in Nebraska Today Program is established and administered by the department, aiming to attract individuals to the teaching profession through student loan repayment assistance or grants for classroom service. Prior to the act's effective date, the program offers student loan repayment assistance capped at \$5,000 annually to eligible Nebraska residents currently teaching full-time. After the effective date, grants up to \$5,000 per year for up to



five years are available to Nebraska residents teaching full-time for five years or less with an income below \$55,000. Applications for both assistance and grants must be submitted by specified deadlines, with disbursements annually. For loans approved before the act, repayment assistance can be applied to principal and interest, with three payment options. The program's total repayment assistance is limited to five million dollars, and grants are capped at ten million dollars annually.

Section-by-Section Summary:

SECTION 2 – DEFINITIONS

- Default
- Department
- Grant
- Program
- Teaching Full-time

SECTION 3

The Teach in Nebraska Today Program is established and will be administered by the department, with the goal of attracting individuals to the teaching profession by offering student loan repayment assistance or grants for service as classroom teachers in the state.

SECTION 4

Before the effective date of this act, the Teach in Nebraska Today Program offers student loan repayment assistance to eligible individuals who are residents of Nebraska, currently teaching full-time or under a full-time teaching contract at the time of application. The repayment assistance is capped at \$5,000 per year. In the event of insufficient funds, priority is given to renewal applications over initial applications, with further priority for initial applications given to those demonstrating financial need. Eligible applicants can receive repayment assistance for student loans incurred for their own educational expenses at accredited public or private nonprofit colleges or universities, with the program closing to new applications after the effective date of this act.

SECTION 5

Starting from the effective date of this act, the Teach in Nebraska Today Program grants are accessible to applicants meeting the following criteria: being a Nebraska resident, teaching full-time or holding a full-time teaching contract during the application, having taught in Nebraska for five years or less at the time of application or renewal, and having an individual income below fifty-five thousand dollars per year. The grant amount for an eligible applicant is capped at five thousand dollars per year, with the possibility of being awarded for up to five years. In case of insufficient funds, the department will establish priorities, favoring renewal applications over initial ones, and prioritizing financial need for initial applications.

SECTION 6

Applications for student loan repayment assistance must be submitted by June 10, 2023, using a form provided by the department. The department will review and notify each applicant of approval or denial by September 10, 2023. Repayment assistance will be disbursed, either in full or partially, by November 10, 2023, and annually on November 10 for applications approved before the effective date of this act. No new applications for loan repayment assistance will be accepted after the effective date of this act. For grants, applications must be submitted by July 10, 2024, and by the same date each subsequent year. The department will decide on each application and notify applicants of the decision no later than October 10, with grant disbursements directly to the applicant by December 10, 2024, and annually by the same date thereafter.

SECTION 7

For applications approved before the effective date of this act, student loan repayment assistance awarded under the



program can be applied to the loan principal and accrued interest. The repayment assistance can be paid in three ways: directly to the lender or loan servicer as a lump sum, directly to the lender or loan servicer in monthly payments (either in twelve equal payments or smaller amounts over a maximum of twenty-four months), or directly to the applicant for making student loan payments, provided the applicant is not in default. If the third option is chosen, the applicant must provide documentation that the full award was used for student loan payments when applying for repayment assistance in subsequent years and when claiming an adjustment to federal adjusted gross income. The department may contract with a third-party vendor to administer the repayment assistance program.

SECTION 8

The program's total student loan repayment assistance is capped at five million dollars, while the total grants awarded under the program are limited to ten million dollars per fiscal year.

Motion to amend LB 986 into AM 3061

Vote Results: 8-0

Voting Aye: Senators Albrecht, Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Murman, Sanders, Walz, Wayne

Voting Nay: None

Testifiers on LB 986

Proponents:

Introducer Senator Lou Ann Linehan Legislative District 39

Opponents:

Tim Royers, Nebraska State Education Association

Neutral:

None

LB 1005 Change provisions relating to the Attracting Excellence in Teaching Program and the Excellence in Teaching Cash Fund under the Excellence in Teaching Act

Bill Summary:

Starting from July 1, 2024, the commission annually allocates up to \$500,000 from funds transferred under section 79-3501 for loans to eligible students enrolling in a student-teaching semester as part of the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program, with distribution to eligible institutions determined by a specified formula and institutions acting as agents for fund distribution to eligible students.

Section-by-Section Summary:

SECTION 1

DEFINITIONS:

- Commission
- Eligible Institution
- Eligible Student
- Full-time Student
- Majoring in a Shortage Area
- Shortage Area
- Teacher Education Program
- Student-teaching Semester – NEW - A student-teaching semester is a period when a student, enrolled full-time in a teacher training program at an eligible institution, gains hands-on experience in a classroom setting. This semester involves practical training to demonstrate the student's competence in the teaching role they are preparing for.



SECTION 2

The commission, either directly or through contracts with public or private entities, administers the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program, which provides loans of up to \$3,000 per year to eligible students graduating in the top quarter of their high school class or with a minimum GPA of 3.0, agreeing to complete a teacher education program, committing to teach in Nebraska, and becoming certified.

Students in a student-teaching semester may apply for an additional loan, with the total not exceeding \$6,000 for the year, and individual student loans are limited to a cumulative period of five consecutive years, funded through eligible institutions and pursuant to section 85-3112.

SECTION 3

The Excellence in Teaching Cash Fund is established, comprising transfers from the Legislature, and repayments, penalties, and interest from the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program and the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program.

Starting from July 1, 2024, the commission allocates funds for the Career-Readiness and Dual-Credit Education Grant Program, providing up to \$250,000 annually, and allocates up to \$500,000 annually for student-teaching semester loans under the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program.

Additional funds, up to \$400,000 annually, support the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program, and up to \$800,000 is allocated for the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program, with amounts over \$1.2 million evenly divided between the two programs.

The funds are distributed to eligible institutions according to specified formulas, and any available funds for investment are managed by the state investment officer.

Motion to amend LB 1005 into AM 3061

Vote Results: 8-0

Voting Aye: Senators Albrecht, Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Murman, Sanders, Walz, Wayne

Voting Nay: None

Testifiers on LB 1005

Proponents:

Introducer Senator Lynne Walz Legislative District 15

Jenni Benson, Nebraska State Education Association

Mike Baumgartner, Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

Jane Erdenberger, Omaha Public Schools

Treva Haugaard, Council of Independent Nebraska Colleges

Opponents:

None

Neutral:

None

LB 1014 Change requirements relating to school psychologists

Bill Summary:

LB 1014 would enable school districts to utilize School Psychologists for special education needs when such persons are employed through a service agency.

Section-by-Section Summary:

SECTION 1

Section 38-3113 of the Psychology Practice Act is amended to clarify that it does not prevent certain activities,



including teaching psychology, psychological research, or provision of services to organizations; allowing members of recognized professions, clergy, and certified school psychologists to practice within their scope; and permitting specified individuals, including graduate students, postdoctoral trainees, and those with a master's degree, to engage in psychology practice under the supervision of a licensed psychologist, subject to rules and regulations.

Motion to amend LB 1014 into AM 3061

Vote Results: 5-2-1

Voting Aye: Senators Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Murman, Walz

Voting Nay: Senators Albrecht, Wayne

Present Not Voting: Senator Sanders

Testifiers on LB 1014

Proponents:

Introducer Senator Lynne Walz, Legislative District 15

Jennifer Pollock, Nebraska School Psychologist Association

Dr. Kristy Feden, Nebraska Association of Special Education Supervisors

Opponents:

None

Neutral:

None

LB 1050 Require school districts to provide menstrual products to students

Bill Summary:

Starting in the 2025-26 school year, the State Department of Education is required to supply each school district with menstrual products and dispensers using a formula based on factors such as the number of bathrooms, students of menstruating age, and average daily product usage.

The State Board of Education is responsible for developing the formula and a framework for requesting and receiving these items.

Each school district must have dispensers with free menstrual products in all school bathrooms, submit annual requests for product quantities, and can adopt related policies.

Notably, the school district and its employees are immune from criminal or civil liability for students' use of the provided menstrual products.

Section-by-Section Summary:

SECTION 1 - DEFINITIONS

- Dispenser
- Menstrual Products
- Public School Building
- School Bathroom

SECTIONS 2 THROUGH 6

Starting from the 2025-26 school year, the State Department of Education is mandated to provide each school district with the necessary menstrual products and dispensers based on a formula accounting for the number of bathrooms, students of menstruating age, and average daily product usage. The State Board of Education is tasked with developing a formula for school districts to determine product quantities, along with a framework for requesting and receiving these items. Each school district must ensure that dispensers with free menstrual products are available in every school bathroom, and they are required to submit annual requests for product quantities to the State



Department of Education. School boards can adopt policies related to these requirements. Importantly, the school district or its employees cannot face criminal or civil liability for students' use of provided menstrual products.

Motion to amend LB 1050 (as amended by 2914) into AM 3061

Vote Results: 6-1-1

Voting Aye: Senators Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Sanders, Walz, Wayne

Voting Nay: Senator Albrecht

Present Not Voting: Senator Murman

Testifiers on LB 1050

Proponents:

Introducer Senator Danielle Conrad Legislative District 46

Cassidy Bell, self

Mindy Diller, Nebraska State Education Association

Archita Raj, Student Advocates for Gender Equality

Lisa Albers, Grand Island Public Schools Board of Education, Nebraska Association of School Boards

Dr. Amanda Roe, self

John P. Neal, Lincoln Public Schools

Scout Richters, American Civil Liberties Union of Nebraska

Spike Eickholt, Voices for Children

Alyssa Capek, self

Opponents:

None

Neutral:

None

LB 1238 Adopt the Special Educators of Tomorrow Act

Bill Summary:

The Special Educators of Tomorrow Act provides eligibility for scholarships or loans to individuals with at least two years of direct support professional experience, enrolled or planning to enroll in an eligible institution for special education teaching.

From the 2024-25 to the 2029-30 school years, eligible students can annually apply for scholarships of up to \$2,500 and loans not exceeding \$4,000 per year, with specific conditions for repayment outlined in a contract.

The Special Educators of Tomorrow Cash Fund is created to finance these initiatives, with the Legislature intending to transfer funds, and the commission is authorized to establish rules. The Division of Developmental Disabilities will inform direct support professionals about these opportunities.

Section-by-Section Summary:

SECTION 1

Names the act: The Special Educators of Tomorrow Act

SECTION 2 - DEFINITIONS

- Commission
- Direct Support Professional
- Eligible Institution
- Eligible Student



- Loan Recipient
- Scholarship Recipient

SECTION 3

Individuals are eligible for a scholarship or loan under the Special Educators of Tomorrow Act if they have at least two years of experience as a direct support professional, are enrolled or planning to enroll in an eligible institution for a teaching career in special education, and, for the loan, commit to completing a special education program and teaching in a Nebraska public or private school upon program completion and certification.

SECTION 4

Starting from the 2024-25 school year through the 2029-30 school year, eligible students meeting specific criteria may apply annually for a scholarship of up to \$2,500 per school year for educational expenses, with recipients needing to be in good academic standing to reapply.

Similarly, eligible students can apply for a loan, not exceeding \$4,000 per school year, for a maximum cumulative period of three consecutive years during the same period, with funding details outlined in section 6 of the act.

SECTION 5

Before receiving a loan under the Special Educators of Tomorrow Act, eligible students must sign a contract with the commission, exempt from certain requirements. The contract specifies conditions for loan repayment, including full-time teaching in special education in Nebraska or completing graduation requirements within three years; failure to meet these conditions triggers repayment with interest and collection costs.

Successful completion of the special education program, certification, and employment as a full-time teacher in Nebraska can lead to loan forgiveness of \$4,000 per year, beginning after the initial two years of teaching.

SECTION 6

The Special Educators of Tomorrow Cash Fund is established to finance scholarships and loans under the Special Educators of Tomorrow Act, consisting of transfers from the Legislature, loan repayments, penalties, and interest payments.

Funds available for investment will be managed by the state investment officer according to relevant state investment acts.

The Legislature intends to transfer \$1.5 million from the General Fund for fiscal year 2024-25 and \$250,000 annually thereafter to the Special Educators of Tomorrow Fund.

SECTION 7

The commission is authorized to establish rules and regulations for the implementation of the Special Educators of Tomorrow Act.

Additionally, the Division of Developmental Disabilities within the Department of Health and Human Services will disseminate information to direct support professionals about the scholarships and loans offered under the Special Educators of Tomorrow Act.

Motion to amend LB 1238 into AM 3061

Vote Results: 6-2

Voting Aye: Senators Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Murman, Sanders, Walz

Voting Nay: Senators Albrecht, Wayne

Testifiers on LB 1238

Proponents:

Introducer Senator Lynne Walz, Legislative District 15



Jenni Benson, Nebraska State Education Association

Isabella Manhart, self

Opponents:

None

Neutral:

None

LB 1253 Create the Dyslexia Research Grant Program

Bill Summary:

The Dyslexia Research Grant Program, overseen by the department, offers grants for researching artificial-intelligence-based writing assistance for dyslexic individuals, with a total fund limit of one million dollars; these grants aim to employ aggregate writing analytics to identify dyslexic writing patterns, aiding teachers in creating literacy plans, and any misused funds trigger legal action for recovery, with the State Board of Education empowered to establish program rules.

Section-by-Section Summary:

SECTION 1

1.1 – DEFINITIONS

- Department
- Eligible Applicant

1.2 – 1.5

The Dyslexia Research Grant Program is established and will be overseen by the department, allowing eligible applicants to apply for grants focusing on researching the use of artificial-intelligence-based writing assistance for individuals with dyslexia. The department can award grants, but the total funds allocated for all grants under this program cannot exceed one million dollars. The grants are specifically designated for researching the application of aggregate writing analytics to identify errors and patterns in the writing of individuals with dyslexia, with the goal of aiding teachers in developing comprehensive literacy plans. If grant funds are misused for purposes other than the designated research, the department is required to notify the Attorney General, who may initiate legal action to recover the misspent funds, directing any collected funds to the State Treasurer for the General Fund. The State Board of Education has the authority to establish rules and regulations for the program's implementation.

Motion to amend LB 1253 into AM 3061

Vote Results: 8-0

Voting Aye: Senators Albrecht, Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Murman, Sanders, Walz, Wayne

Voting Nay: None

Testifiers on LB 1253

Proponents:

Bridget Peterkin, Deslexico LLC

Tristan Curd, Deslexico LLC

Janae Harris, Made for More

Colby Coash, Nebraska Association of School Boards, Educational Service Unit Coordinating Council

Pablo A. Rangel, self

Opponents:

Megan Pitrat, Nebraska State Education Agencies

Neutral:



None

LB 1254 Provide for a professional learning system and regional coaches for teaching students to read

Bill Summary:

The State Department of Education is tasked with developing and implementing a professional learning system for teachers in kindergarten through third grade, focusing on high-quality reading instruction.

This system, applicable to approved or accredited schools and early childhood education programs, offers information and tips for teachers to collaborate with family literacy centers, strengthening home and family literacy programs.

Approved or accredited elementary schools must ensure teacher awareness and adequate training in the professional learning system.

The State Department collaborates with educational service units to provide regional coaches to these schools, offering assistance and job-embedded training related to reading instruction.

The Commissioner of Education is required to file an annual report on the professional learning system's status, and the Legislature intends to allocate ten million dollars annually from the General Fund for regional coaches and training.

Motion to amend LB 1254 into AM 3061

Vote Results: 8-0

Voting Aye: Senators Albrecht, Conrad, Linehan, Meyer, Murman, Sanders, Walz, Wayne

Voting Nay: None

Testifiers on LB 1254

Proponents:

Introducer Senator Lou Ann Linehan, Legislative District 39

Eileen Voutravers, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Brian Maher, Department of Education

John Skretta, Schools Taking Action Nebraska Children's Education, Nebraska Association of School Boards, Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association, Educational Service Unity Coordinating Commission, Nebraska Council of School Administrators

Elizabeth Everett, First Five Nebraska

Tom Venzor, Nebraska Catholic Conference

Korby Gilbertson, Nebraska Optometric Association

Opponents:

Heather Schmidt, self

Gwen Easter, Safe Haven Community Center

Neutral:

None

Dave Murman, Chairperson

