Kyle McGowan, Ambassador

Kyle has been a Nebraska educator for 35 years. His first position was an elementary teacher and he’s had almost every role possible as a school administrator, i.e. A.D./H.S. Assistant Principal, Elementary Assistant Principal, Elementary Principal, Curriculum Director, Assistant Superintendent. He retired as the Crete Public School Superintendent in 2016, after ten years in that role.

Cinde Wendell, Ambassador

Cinde has worked as an elementary teacher, school psychologist, special education director, principal, and superintendent. Since retiring from Holdrege Public Schools in 2011, she has been an adjunct with University of Nebraska at Kearney and continues to do adjunct teaching with the Ed.S. program at Doane University. She served as an interim superintendent for Sumner-Eddyville-Miller School and worked as a consultant with the Nebraska Association of School Board Educational Leadership Search Service.

Keith Rohwer, Ambassador

Keith began his career in education as a sixth grade teacher in the Fremont Public Schools in the fall of 1973. He spent 20 years in the Fremont Schools and worked as a Classroom Teacher, an Elementary Principal and as an Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education. He had the opportunity to serve as the Superintendent of Schools in Nebraska City from 1993 to 2008.
What drew you to education and what keeps drawing you back in?

There’s an energy inside and around a school building. It’s exciting to see children of all ages discovering their potential. I also have always had a somewhat “Pollyanna” view of America. I truly believe education is the great equalizer in our nation. Knowledge and work ethic can break those terrible cycles of poverty and hopelessness. I like to think I can do a small part in turning hope into a positive reality. At the very least, I will always give back the positive energy I was fortunate to receive from so many others.

I loved working with children and loved the rural life. Public schools and agriculture have been the main focus in my life. I am continually drawn to education because that is what I love. I truly believe that education is the key to success and a free and appropriate public education must be available to all.

I am passionate about supporting all the good things that our public schools do for our Nebraska students and families [who are] working side-by-side with their communities and businesses. Working in parallel with Nebraska Loves Public Schools, we have an incredible story to tell about public school education in Nebraska. I am proud to be an NCSA Ambassador and have the opportunity to promote all of the wonderful and exciting opportunities that are being afforded to kids in the public schools around the state.

In my 42 years of being in this business, the kids we see each day are the biggest “draw” in our career of education. Each day in education is new and unique. Knowing that no two days are alike gives you the energy and commitment to continue in this career.
What’s the biggest issue facing Nebraska public schools?

Nebraska has one of the fastest growing poverty rates, for children, in the nation. The state’s demographics are shifting to a higher percentage of minority students and children with limited English speaking skills. I believe our state can flourish with our new families, who come with a renewed pioneer spirit, if we welcome and provide the support needed to assure a continued world-class education for all. This will require additional services such as early childhood education and other extended opportunities. It’s no time to cut funding for an educational system which already ranks 49th for receiving state monies.

Funding is always a big issue in Nebraska. Public schools are expected (and strive) to do more and more with limited resources. Poverty and social issues create challenges in education. Preparing students from early childhood to transitioning to the work place and higher education in a global environment is so important. Thanks to our dedicated educators and supportive communities and business, we will continue to meet all the challenges that come our way in public education.

The biggest issue facing Nebraska public schools is the continuing challenge to meet the needs of all students. Contained in the issue of meeting student needs is the implementation of a broad K-12 articulated curriculum, student language challenges, student learning disabilities, student physical disabilities, student assessment requirements, student poverty and school funding.
What do you wish the average citizen knew about public schools?

I wish all of our citizens were aware of the quality education available to all students from birth through age 21. Students are graduating at record rates with an accountability of high expectations never required in the history of Nebraska schools. Nebraska graduates feed a work force with record low unemployment rates because they’re prepared for careers. Students choosing college are accepted and succeed throughout the nation’s top educational institutions. A work ethic is intertwined within every school community.

Nebraska is full of fantastic public schools. We have top graduation rates, top ACT scores and incredibly positive and safe environments for our students. Unfortunately, like typical Nebraskans, our educators tend to be too modest. What may be considered extraordinary in many states is often the standard for Nebraska schools.

I want everyone to know what a great job our Nebraska Public Schools do to educate ALL of our students. Public schools welcome all students no matter what their abilities, disabilities, race, social economic status, etc. Public schools take everyone. Our students test well nationally even though funding is one of the lowest nationally.

The average citizen needs to have a better understanding of the complexity of what we do each and every day in school. It is so much more than teaching a set curriculum. We provide breakfast, lunch, summer meals, nursing services, counseling services, behavior modification, parent education, career education, summer school, high ability challenge classes, dual credit courses, athletics, fine arts and personal support for each and every student.
What’s your hope for the future of public schools in Nebraska?

Public schools need to be of high quality in every corner of the State. The State must continue to invest in education and assure that all children have an opportunity to succeed.

My hope for Nebraska public schools is to strive for excellence, continue to meet the needs of all students with the appropriate financial and social support both locally and on the state level.

Our focus needs to be on kids and their specific needs. My hope is that we can find common ground to address the existing key educational issues in Nebraska. I believe that collaboration and cooperation between all schools in Nebraska is the best way to find this common ground. A united force to support education in Nebraska is the best way to meet the needs of our students. We know more about teaching and learning today than at any time in history. We need to focus that knowledge on kids each and every day in our classrooms.

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