

EDUCATION COUNCIL

August 19, 2026, 9 a.m.

Host Location:

Office of the CIO (OCIO) 501 S. 14th Street-Training Center 1A
Lincoln, NE 68508

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Co-Chair, Gary Needham, ESU 09

Co-Chair, Andrew Buker, University of Nebraska Members

Dr. Jaci Lindburg, University of Nebraska

Derek Bierman, Doane University

Bryce Swiggum, Alternate for Jeremiah Ourada

Corey Gearhart, Grand Island Public Schools

Scott Isaacson, ESU Coordinating Council

Elizabeth Kumru, Nebraska Association of School Boards

Leonard Kwapnioski, Columbus Public Schools

Matt Chrisman, Mitchell Secondary School

Dr. Cheri Polenski, Nebraska State College System

Tom Peters, Central Community College

Nick Muir, Wayne State College

Brandon Eckmann, Northeast Community College

(The Council has vacancies representing the Private/Parochial Schools and the Nebraska State Education Association sectors.)

LIAISONS PRESENT:

Dr. Matthew McCarville, Chief Information Officer, State of Nebraska

Christina Struebing, Nebraska Department of Education

Dr. Kathleen Fimple, Alternate for Dr. Paul Turman, Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

MEMBERS/LIAISONS ABSENT:

Molly Delaney, Nebraska Public Media

OCIO/NITC STAFF PRESENT:

Callie Richards, Education IT Programs Officer

Lori Lopez Urdiales, Office Services Manager

CALL TO ORDER, ELECTRONIC POSTING, LOCATION OF OPEN MEETING LAW DOCUMENTS, ROLL CALL, INTRODUCTIONS

Co-Chair Gary Needham called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. A quorum was present to conduct official business. The meeting notice was posted to the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar, and the agenda was posted to the NITC website in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. Council members introduced themselves.

Dr. Fimple joined the meeting at 9:11

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA FOR THE AUGUST 19, 2026 MEETING*

Co-chair, Mr. Needham, indicated that in August the Co-Chairs of the Council are nominated and approved. In addition, Lloyd Summers is interested in representing the Private/Parochial Sector on the council. Members were asked if they prefer to amend the agenda or have them on the next council meeting agenda.

Mr. Gearhart moved to amend the agenda to add the nomination and approval of council co-chairs. Mr. Swiggum seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Buker-Yes, Bierman-Yes, Chrisman-Yes, Isaacson-Yes, Eckmann-Yes, Gearhart-Yes, Kwapnioski-Yes, Kumru-Yes, Lindburg-Yes, Muir-Yes, Needham-Yes, Swiggum-Yes, Peters-Yes, and Polenski-Yes. Results: Yes-14, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

Mr. Bierman moved to amend the agenda to add the nomination of the Private/Parochial Sector representative to serve on the Council. Mr. Isaacson seconded. Roll call vote: Buker-Yes, Bierman-Yes, Chrisman-Yes, Isaacson-Yes, Eckmann-Yes, Gearhart-Yes, Kwapnioski-Yes, Kumru-Yes, Lindburg-Yes, Muir-Yes, Needham-Yes, Swiggum-Yes, Peters-Yes, and Polenski-Yes. Results: Yes-14, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

Mr. Muir moved to approve the admended August 19, 2026 agenda. Mr. Bierman seconded. Roll call vote: Kwapnioski-Yes, Kumru-Yes, Lindburg-Yes, Muir-Yes, Needham-Yes, Swiggum-Yes, Peters-Yes, Buker-Yes, Bierman-Yes, Chrisman-Yes, Isaacson-Yes, Eckmann-Yes, Gearhart-Yes, and Polenski-Yes. Results: Yes-14, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

NOMINATION AND APPROVAL OF CO-CHAIRS

The K12 and higher education sectors broke out into sessions to discuss their nominations.

Mr. Muir moved to nominate Gary Needham and Derek Bierman to serve as the Education Council Co-Chairs. Mr. Gearhart seconded. Roll call vote: Buker-Yes, Bierman-Yes, Chrisman-Yes, Isaacson-Yes, Eckmann-Yes, Gearhart-Yes, Kwapnioski-Yes, Kumru-Yes, Lindburg-Yes, Muir-Yes, Needham-Yes, Swiggum-Yes, Peters-Yes, and Polenski-Yes. Results: Yes-14, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

NOMINATION AND APPROVAL OF NEW COUNCIL MEMBER

Mr. Peters moved to recommend the nomination of Lloyd Summer representing the Private/Parochial sector to the NITC. Mr. Gearhart seconded. Roll call vote: Isaacson-Yes, Eckmann-Yes, Gearhart-Yes, Polenski-Yes, Kwapnioski-Yes, Kumru-Yes, Lindburg-Yes, Muir-Yes, Needham-Yes, Swiggum-Yes, Peters-Yes,

Buker-Yes, Bierman-Yes, and Chrisman-Yes. Results: Yes-14, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM JUNE 17, 2026*

Ms. Kumru moved to approve the June 17, 2026 minutes as presented. Mr. Bierman seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Kwapnioski-Yes, Kumru-Yes, Lindburg-Yes, Muir-Yes, Needham-Yes, Swiggum-Yes, Peters-Yes, Buker-Yes, Bierman-Yes, Chrisman-Yes, Isaacson-Yes, Eckmann-Yes, Gearhart-Yes, and Polenski-Yes. Results: Yes-14, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

NETWORK NEBRASKA UPDATE

The RFP is completed for a total of 14 new circuits and 3 upgrades. Viaero was the awardee. There were some shipping and permit delays but the deployment went very well. Members had questions. It was suggested to provide a Network Nebraska Update presentation at the next meeting. Some of the questions were as follows:

- what percentage of the participants do the service providers serve
- what was the downtime for each of the service providers, and
- what was the impact of the downtime

Cost recovery and participation fee outreach will be combined this year. The equipment has arrived for the router refresh that will begin in the fall. It was also suggested to add the technical contacts and billing contact information, or possibly inform the technical supervisors a week before the correspondence goes out.

STATEWIDE TECH PLAN DISCUSSION*

Co-chair, Gary Needham, provided historical background on the Education Council's role in developing the Statewide Technology Plan.

TASK GROUP UPDATES (with breakout session)

Before breaking out into task groups, the members suggested having an updated Task Group membership list. It has been beneficial to have Task Group breakout time at the Council meetings. Members also stated that having a Task Group Chair was helpful in organizing and guiding the task group.

Some of the items and topics brought by the Task Groups for further development in the Statewide Plan:

- Communication needs to be enhanced. Mr. Swiggum would like the Task Group to develop a communication plan.

- There is a need to do another customer survey. It has been a long time since the last one was done.
- It was recommended to continue to identify cybersecurity practices.
- The council would like to encourage more K-20 participation. It was suggested to be more visible at conferences and state meetings.
- It appears that a couple of the action items could be combined.
- Expand awareness of Network Nebraska
- The council will need to discuss and address AI practices in digital education.
- The council would like to look at innovative ways for the “measurables”.

The Task Group Chairs are listed below:

Security Task Group, Cheri Polenski

Digital Education, Matt Chrisman

Network Nebraska, Cory Gearhardt

Communication, Bryce Swiggum

Task groups will schedule follow-up meetings to continue discussion and work on the Statewide Technology Plan.

Ms. Richards announced that there is a dual credit meeting on 8/27. Members were asked to contact her if they were interested in attending.

SUBSECTOR REPORTS (if time permits)

There was no time for sector reports.

OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

There was no other business.

DISCUSS NEXT MEETINGS AGENDA/LOCATION

The main agenda items for the next meeting will be the continued discussion and approval of the action items for the Statewide Technology Plan. Since many council members will be attending the Cybersecurity and AI Summit, October 22nd in Omaha, it was agreed to have the next Education Council on Wednesday, October 21st. Mr. Buker offered to host the next meeting at the UNO Community Engagement Center in Omaha.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Kumru moved to adjourn. Mr. Muir seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

The meeting minutes were taken by Lori Lopez Urdiales and reviewed by Callie Richards from the Office of the CIO.