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Spring 2025 Newsletter



Nine's Lines Newsletter

From the Administrator

Drew Harris

Retiree: On May 16th, we will hold an open house from 3–5 pm at the ESU 9 building to honor this year's retiree, Jo Ellen Jones-Steele. Jo Ellen is completing her sixth year with ESU 9. We appreciate her service and dedication during that time and invite you to join us to celebrate her career and time with us.



Others moving on from ESU 9 are Kristen Slechta, Professional Development Team (10 years); Jordon Messersmith, Childhood Speech & Language Pathologist (7 years); Alexis Schneider, Speech & Language Pathologist (4 years); and Rachel Kathman, Speech & Language Pathologist (3 years). Thank you for your service with ESU 9.

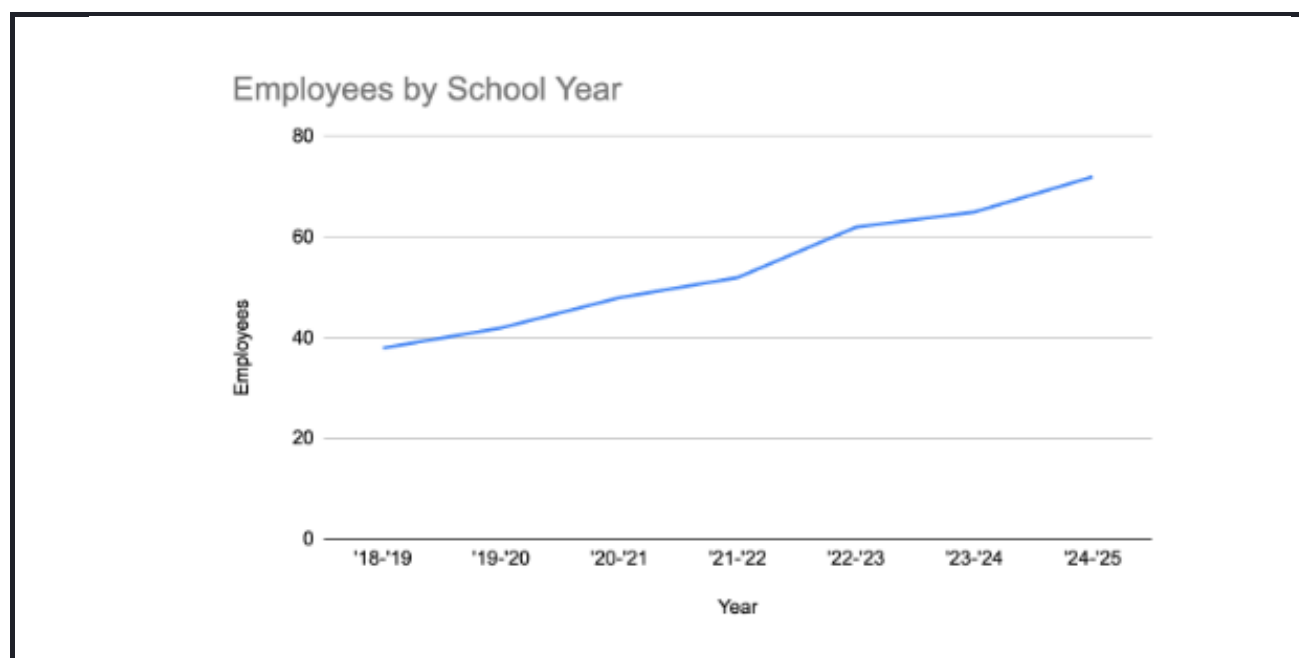
District Leadership Changes: There will be new superintendents in four of the fifteen ESU 9 member school district next year. I'd like to thank these outgoing superintendents for their leadership: Jeff Schneider, Hastings Public Schools (5 years); Nick Mumm, Giltner Public Schools (5 years); Stephen Grizzle, Lawrence-Nelson (2 years, though he will continue at Sandy Creek); and Brad Best, Sutton (1-year interim position). It has been a pleasure working with all of these individuals.

The incoming school leaders for next year are: Matt Gordon, Giltner; Chris Prososki, Hastings Public Schools; Josh Lawrence-Nelson; and Jason Cline, Sutton. We look forward to working with these individuals.

The United States Department of Education: The United States Department of Education (USDE) was founded by Congress in 1979. In January of 2025, the department employed just over 4,200 people. As of mid-April, the department had just over 2,000 employees remaining. The main functions of the USDE include administering federal financial aid for colleges and universities, civil rights enforcement, data collection and research, policy development, distributing federal education funding to K-12 schools, and supporting special education services and IDEA programs.

Proponents of the reduction in force feel it will increase local control, reduce federal bureaucracy, and simplify compliance. Opponents fear it will remove civil rights protections, diminish support for special education, disrupt federal financial aid, and reduced educational equity. Whether the department is closed entirely or not, the reduction in staff alone is bound to impact services. This will increase the responsibilities at the state level. While there are obviously a lot of unknowns at this point, I do believe Nebraska will step up to try to maintain the integrity of civil rights protection and will continue to support special needs students to a high degree. I am not confident that will be the case in all states. We will be watching this situation closely as it unfolds.

Continued Growth: ESU 9 continues to see increases in requests for services. All of our departments, special services, professional development, technology, and finance have experienced growth again this year. This is to meet the increased requests for services from our member school districts. Our Title 1C program has also been a source of continued growth over the last several years. In all, our number of employees has grown from 38 in the 2018-2019 school year to 72 in 2025. I believe the quality of programs, reliable service provided, and excellent staff are the main reasons for that growth. Thank you for your trust and confidence in ESU 9.



It's been another fun year, with many valuable interactions to support our schools and their students. I'm proud of the accomplishments of our staff and organization. Two new initiatives in place for the coming year include the Comprehensive Behavioral Academy (CBA) and the Literacy Project. I'm excited to see what the 2025–26 school year has in store for us!

Have a wonderful summer!

🎵 ESU 9's Summer Learning Playlist: [Hit Tracks for Educator Growth](#) 🎵

Amy Schultz

Get ready to press play on an unforgettable summer of learning at ESU 9! We've curated a hit playlist of workshops and conferences designed to amp up your professional practice, connect you with expert voices, and inspire fresh ideas for the upcoming school year. Whether you're looking to fine-tune your tech skills, remix your instructional strategies, or drop some new knowledge into your classroom toolkit—there's a track for that.

Some new knowledge into your classroom toolkit. Here's a track for that.

May Tracks – Early Release Singles



- **May 27-28:** *HQIM Implementation Support* – A chart-topper for curriculum alignment and instructional fidelity
- **May 29-30:** *AI for Education* – Learn how artificial intelligence can play backup to your best instructional solo

June Tracks – Full Album Drop

- **June 3:** *Tech Training for Administrative Assistants @ ESU 6* – Boost your tech tempo.
- **June 3:** *Leadership Retreat @ ESU 10* – Reflect, refocus, and reset your leadership playlist.
- **June 4-5:** *UDL with Katie Novak* – A headliner event that helps you design instruction for *all* learners.
- **June 9-11:** *NCE Conference in Kearney* – The state's greatest hits for networking and innovation.
- **June 9-10:** *Planning for Inclusion through Co-Teaching with Lisa Dieker* – A dynamic two-day collaboration ja
- **June 12:** *ESU 9 CIP and NeMTSS Support and Guidance* – Harmonize your school improvement efforts.
- **June 16-17:** *Classroom Make and Take* – Hands-on fun to craft materials that work in *your* classroom.
- **June 19-20:** *OpenSciEd* – Explore this inquiry-based hit that gets students thinking like scientists.
- **June 23-24:** *Grow Your Own Teacher Institute* – Empower future educators with this encore performance.

Don't Miss the Summer Soundtrack!

Spots fill fast—register today to reserve your front-row seat at the summer learning stage. Whether you're a solo act bringing the whole band, ESU 9 has a track that'll hit the right note for you.

Let's make learning your summer anthem.   Full Soundtrack of Summer Learning can be found [HERE](https://connect.esu9.org).


Summer Professional Learning
ESU 9

bit.ly/2025summerESU9
 Visit connect.esu9.org for registration

Month	Dates	Event
May	27-28	HQIM Implementation Support
	29-30	AI for Education
June	3	Administrative Assistants Technology Training
	3	Technology Coordinator's Meeting
	3	Emergency Operations Plan Workshop
	3	Finding Your Leadership Edge with Dr. Brad Johnson
	4-5	Universal Design for Learning with Dr. Katie Novak
	9	Planning for Inclusion with Dr. Lisa Dieker (Repeat from 2024)
	10	Planning for Inclusion Success with Dr. Lisa Dieker (NEW this Year!)
July	9-11	Career and Technical Education Conference (NCE)
	12	CIP/MTSS Workday
	16-17	Classroom Make-N-Take
	18	504 Training
August	19-20	OpenSciEd: K-12 Science HQIM
	23-24	Grow Your Own Teacher Institute
July	23	NDE Day
	24-25	Administrator Days
August	30	Psychological First Aid
	31	Athletic Director Cadre
	1	Acadience
August	4-5	Let's Get Cooking New Teacher Series
	6	Paraprofessional Training

If you have any questions regarding ESU'9's summer learning opportunities, please reach out to a member of the Professional Learning Team.


ESU 9 Professional Learning Team



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Technology Department Update

Gary Needham

As I am writing this article, the [NETA](#) Conference for the year is drawing to a close. I've had the privilege of not only attending, but also speaking at the annual technology conference more than 20 times throughout my career. (Usually presentations are pretty nerdy, so I won't bore you with a link to the slides.) As I reflect on this year's conference, it's to note several themes over the years:

- **Keynote speakers share new and interesting statistics and facts.** This year, Adam Welcome remarked that the one of the most common first words of babies is "Alexa." He's from Silicon Valley, so personally, I hope that's a local trend.
- **Gadgets draw us in.** From Leslie Fisher's recurring presentation simply titled "Gadgets" to the vendors both peddling and giving away something previously unseen, it's easy to be drawn into discussions about anything new.
- **The next generation will be different because....** From Apple's "Think different" posters and related professional development years ago, to computing devices that store everything in the cloud, to voice activated "smart" things, to artificial intelligence, today's students are not afraid of the things that represent significant change to us. Adults may choose to change or not, for legitimate reasons or simply a desire not to adopt the technology. Regardless, our youngest students will generally never have known a world that has not had *<in: new technology here>*.
- **Teaching and Learning is still about relationships.** We have heard the stories of Abraham Lincoln teaching himself by candlelight and students who go through on-line classes, sometimes even for free, on myriad topics. Offline, non-interactive methods work for those who are already motivated to keep learning. In general, however, we learn through connection to and relationships with others. At a conference, I find that I learn as much in the hallway collaborations between sessions as I do through the sessions themselves. Regardless of Bill Gates' predictions or the technology used, good teachers will always be needed. Thank you for your work this year! It has been important, and has likely influenced more people in a positive direction than you realize.

Youth Events Recap

Laura Ochsner

The Professional Learning Team has had a busy semester of Youth Events!

Quiz Bowl week started with **Elementary Quiz Bowl** on February 4th. Hastings Middle School Black (6th grade) was winner, Blue Hill finished in 2nd place and HPS Watson Gold finished in 3rd place. **High School Quiz Bowl** was on February 5th. Sandy Creek Red was the winner, St. Cecilia Blue finished in 2nd place and Hastings High Black finish 3rd place. **Junior High Quiz Bowl** was on February 6th. Aurora was the winner, St.Cecilia Blue finished in 2nd place Kenesaw finished in 3rd place.

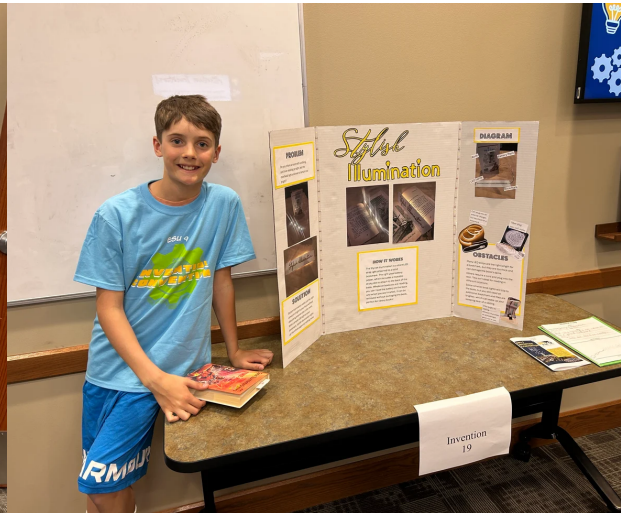


The annual **Chess Tournament** was held on April 1, 2025. Approximately 170 students in grades 3-12 participated this event!





Invention Convention is back! Invention Convention was held at ESU 9 on April 29, 2025. This was the 31st year Invention Convention and we are so happy this event is making a comeback!



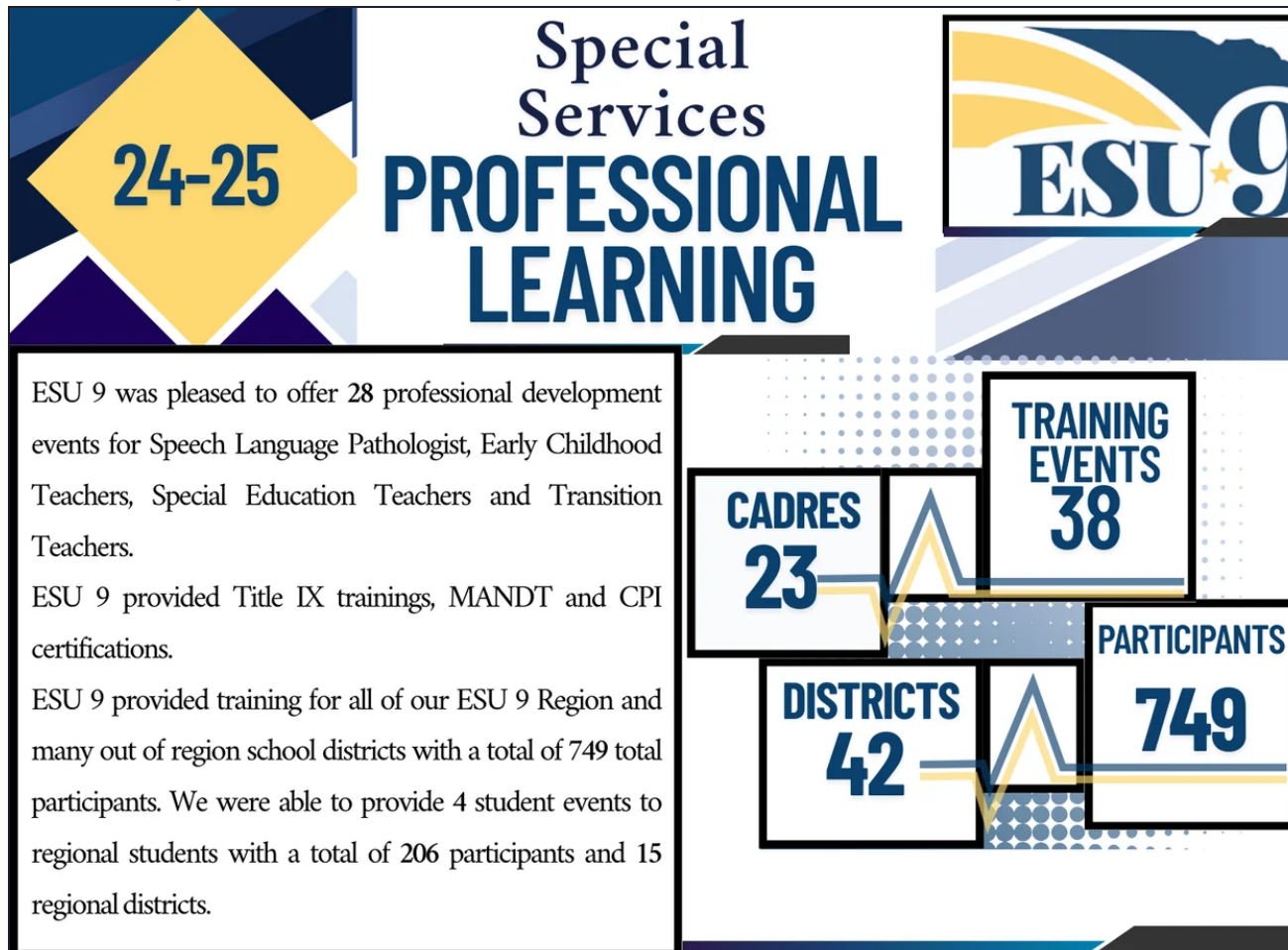
ESU 9 hosted the 31st annual **Nebraska ESU State Quiz Bowl Tournament** on April 30, 2025. ESUs from across state send 2 teams to represent their area to this tournament. Thirty teams participated. Sandy Creek and St. Cecil represented ESU 9 as the first and second place teams from our local high school tournament. The winner of State Quiz Bowl was Elkhorn North.






Special Services Year in Review

Joe Haney




Professional Development	Events	Participants	Districts
Training for: Speech Language Pathology (x4) Early Childhood Special Education (x8) IEP Academy (x3) TAP-(x2) SPED teacher-(x2) Transition Teacher-(x3) TIPS-(x1) Youth Mental Health- (x3)	28	502	15
MANDT	2	11	1
CPI	2	12	3

Title IX	2	18	8
Student Transition Events	4	206	15
Total	38	749	42



SPECIAL SERVICES



ESU 9 Special Services Department employs 55 staff to provide services to all 15 ESU 9 region districts and to 4 out of region districts. We have 10 main service areas: Speech Language Pathology, Vision, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Sign Language Interpreters, School Psychology services, LMHP services, Early Childhood Special Education, Spanish Interpreting and Special Education Consultation. Added Behavioral Interventionist for 24-25 school year.

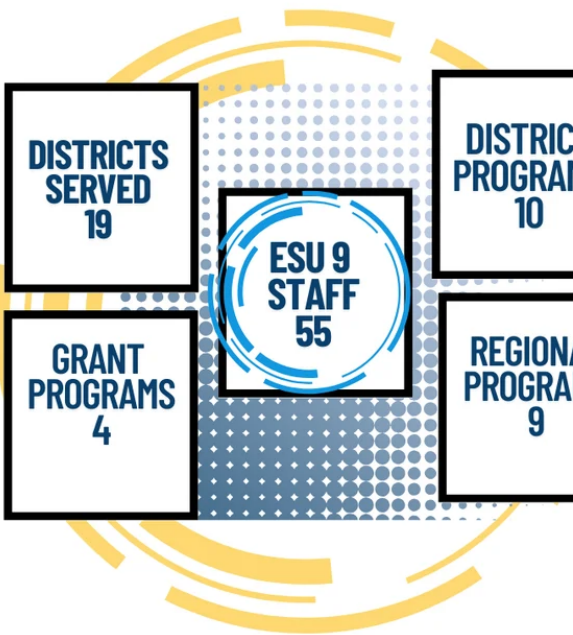
ESU 9 hosts 2 regional programs:

18 Plus

Project Search

ESU 9 hosts 4 grant programs:

- CWNP
- NRP
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Liaison,
- Title IC ESU 9 Migrant Education Grant



Special Services	2024-2025 School Year
ESU 9 Special Services Staff	55
Total districts served	15 in the ESU 9 Region 4 out of Region

District Programs	10
ESU 9 Regional Programs	2
Grant Programs	4

Upcoming Events

- School Business Office Manager Meeting - May 19
- HQIM Implementation Support - May 27-28
- AI for Education with Amanda Bickerstaff - May 29-30
- Technology Coordinators Meeting - June 3
- Administrative Assistants Technology Training - June 3
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - June 4-5
- Planning for Inclusion through Co-Teaching - June 9
- Planning for Inclusion Success - June 10
- CIP Support & Guidance - June 12
- Classroom Make & Take - June 16-17
- 504 in Schools - June 18
- OpenSciEd - June 19-20
- Grow Your Own: Course 1 New Lead Teacher Institute - June 25
- Psychological First Aid in Schools - July 30
- Athletic Directors Cadre - July 31
- Acadience Training - August 1
- Let's Get Cookin' New Teachers - August 4-5
- Paraprofessional Training - August 6
- SRS Training - August 20

Register online at: <https://connect.esu9.org/>.



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[Unsubscribe](#)

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