

*Chronological statements submitted for public record at the Nebraska State Board of Education meeting on September 3, 2021. See PDF file of emails and documents referenced and submitted as well.*

**Number One:**

On September 26, 2019, Board Member Deborah Neary contacted Ryan Foor and stated as follows:

**"I want to make sure that Lisa Schulze is selected to help write the NDE Health Standards... Please let me know what I need to do to make sure she is selected".**

That is a direct quote from Board Member Neary's email to Ryan Foor.

You all have received a copy, so you can follow the timeline we are setting out for you. This timeline will show that Board Member Neary has worked behind the scenes in an effort to influence all of you to adopt standards which were initially written by teachers from across the state, but were then taken over and manipulated by activists working secretly with Board Member Neary. Most of this was kept from you, which is why there has been so much controversy and confusion with this entire process. Many of you on the board and in the NDE trusted the process without knowing that someone was manipulating the process. By the end of this meeting, you will see exactly how this unfolded without your knowledge.

On September 30, 2019, Board Member Deborah Neary contacted Ryan Foor and stated: "I will not involve myself in the selection process as we discussed. I want the process to happen organically as it should."

It appears that between September 26<sup>th</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup> of 2019, Mr. Foor spoke with Ms. Neary and recommended that she should not be advocating for certain people and that she should "trust the process".

This timeline was developed by reviewing a large number of emails and text messages received through public records requests served on the Department of Education over the past six months.

On October 20, 2019, Neary emailed Ryan Foor and Matt Blomstedt, informing them:

*"I am very disappointed that none of the folks that I recommend to participate in the Nebraska Health Education Standards Writing Team were selected... I now do not have anyone on the writing team that can keep me informed... I also want to know how I can make sure that Dr. Heerten-Rodriguez, Lisa Schulze, and others that I recommended can be included in the process somehow... Please let me know what the next steps are to include them now."*

Apparently, Ms. Neary was no longer willing to remain uninvolved in the process and was unwilling to allow the Health Education Standards to be developed organically.

Number Two:

On October 23, 2019, the Equity Officer for the Department of Education, recommended Abbi Swatsworth, from OutNebraska, based solely on her LGBT advocacy. In that email exchange, Lacey Peters, the PE and Health Education Specialist for the Department of Education said it was **not pertinent whether Ms. Swatsworth had any knowledge about Health and/or health education.**

Soon thereafter, the lists of writing team members and experts were revised to include the names of Lisa Schulze, Matt Avey, and Liam Heerten-Rodriguez, which were all selected by Board Member Neary.

Abbi Swatsworth had been added as well, in spite of the fact that no one knew whether she had any knowledge about health education.

On September 16, 2020 Lacey Peters shared a website of resources with Zainab Rida which contained “equity” picture books and other resources for schools. Included in the resources were books such as *I Am Jazz*, *I'm a Girl!*, *Pink Is For Boys*, and *Julian is a Mermaid*. These and other picture books are produced for ages as young as 3yrs old and deal with gender identity.

Ms. Rida replied: “WOW!! These are great resources”.

This shows that officials in the Nebraska Department of Education are interested in more than simply developing broad standards. Specific resources are of interest as well.

December 18, 2020, Lisa Schulze and her team were working on an “advocacy plan” for the Health Education Standards. In an email to an employee with the Department of Education, Ms. Schulze specifically discloses that she is working on an “advocacy plan”, so she needed to know the timeline the NDE had established for the adoption of the new Health Education Standards.

This is the same Lisa Schulze Board Member Neary had made sure to be part of the process.

You have all been provided a copy of these emails, so you can follow the timeline we are setting out for you.

### Number Three:

In early 2021, possibly January, Lisa Schulze sent a text to Board Member Neary, in which she stated: “*We are going to make some linkages to suicide prevention, especially for lgbtq students. Both Oregon and Idaho have had a lot of success with that approach*”.

It is possible that the “advocacy plan” developed by Lisa Schulze included using suicide to convince people that the LGBT and Comprehensive Sexual Education aspects of draft #1 were necessary to save the lives of children because: “*Both Oregon and Idaho have had a lot of success with that approach*”.

On March 5, 2021, Ms. Schulze texted Ms. Neary informing her that Schulze had national experts ready to review draft #1 on Wednesday March 10<sup>th</sup>.

Remember that Lisa Schulze, personally selected by Board Member Neary, had developed an advocacy plan for the inclusion of LGBT and Comprehensive Sexual Education in the Health Education Standards, and now Lisa Schulze was bringing in “**National Experts**”.

Ms. Schulze had also volunteered to meet with people “**behind the scenes**” to discuss her experiences in convincing the Omaha Public School’s Board of Education to adopt Comprehensive Sexual Education in Omaha.

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Number FOUR:

Lisa Schulze, the person Board Member Neary personally selected for the writing team texted Ms. Neary to inform her that she will “love our new health standards fact sheet”.

This means that some or all of the facts and information used by the Board of Education and the Department of Education, especially those portions related to LGBT matters and Comprehensive Sexual Education, came from Lisa Schulze, who was one of the people specifically selected for the writing team by Board Member Neary.

By late-afternoon of March 10, 2021, the day the First Draft of the Health Standards was released, Lisa Schulze had provided the NDE a set of “talking points” and a fact sheet to be used in order to defend the 1<sup>st</sup> Draft.

Within 20 minutes of receiving Ms. Schulze’s email, Ryan M. Foor, NDE’s the NDE Board Relations, Rules, and Regulations Officer, had forwarded Ms. Schulze’s email to all NDE Board members. It appears board members and NDE staff leaned on these documents as calls, emails, and media interviews ensued.

If you recall, Lisa Schulze was hand-picked by Board Member Neary, had been working on an “Advocacy Plan” several months in advance of this, had provided a “Fact Sheet” to the NDE on Comprehensive Sexual Education and LGBT issues, and had been working with “National Experts”.

As soon as the public began contacting the NDE in response to Draft #1, there was obvious bias against people with conservative views.

In an email on March 11, 2021, a member of the Subject Matter Experts Team and an employee in the NDE, referred to a concerned grandmother as “CRAZY” because she did not agree with the sexuality training in the standards.

The email was sent to Lacy Peters, the PE and Health Education Specialist for the NDE.

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Number Five:

On about the same day Draft #1 was released, March 20, 2021, Lisa Schulze put Jay Irwin in contact with Board Member Neary, informing her that Mr. Irwin was “ready to mobilize”. Mr. Irwin was UNO professor of Trans Studies at the time.

This is the same Lisa Schulze who was hand-selected by Board Member Neary to work on the Health Education Standards, and who developed the advocacy plan, fact sheet, and talking points for the Board Members and the NDE employees.

On approximately March 11, 2021, Lisa Schulze texted Board Member Neary and referenced a “big partner meeting on Tuesday”, presumably March 16, at which they would discuss draft #1.

It is unclear who the “partners” are, but it may be Andrew Aleman, Abbie Swatsworth, and Sofia Jawed-Wessel, with whom she was collaborating at that time.

Or possibly she was referring to certain financial supporters which have been significant financial backers of the Women’s Fund of Omaha which was Lisa Schulze’s employer at the time.

After March 10, 2021, Lisa Schulze informs Board Member Deborah Neary that she has “four youth for May”, referencing the Board of Education meeting.

Lisa Schulze later informs Board Member Neary that she had hired four new youth social media influencers, and that Schulze’s assistant, Tiffany, was now speaking regularly with “Ryan”, which may refer to Ryan Foor in the NDE.

The Bylaws of the Board of Education require members to “Treat fellow Members and staff with kindness, civility, respect, patience and honesty”.

It appears that Board Member Neary did not disclose to any of you that the person she had personally selected to work on the Health Education Standards had made arrangements with youth advocates.

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Number Six:

On March 12, 2021, Board Member Neary was thanking Lisa Schulze for helping her prepare for a TV interview on Draft #1 in front of one of the Omaha schools. The prepared comment includes a reference to youth suicide due to youths being bullied for their gender identity or sexual preferences.

You might recall an earlier text from Lisa Schulze to Board member Neary which stated, *"We are going to make some linkages to suicide prevention, especially for lgbtq students. Both Oregon and Idaho have had a lot of success with that approach".*

Apparently this approach was part of the advocacy plan, talking points, or fact sheet prepared by Lisa Schulze. The same Lisa Schulze who Board Member Neary made sure to be appointed to the process by the Department of Education.

On March 16, 2021, Lisa Schulze advised NDE's Cory Epler:

*"We have a plan for the next six months and will be ready for the April 2 meeting. We meet with key partners today."*

The plan and the key partners come into more focus later in the communications between Ms. Schulze and Board Member Neary. On that same day (March 16, 2021), Ms. Neary informed Board President Maureen Nickels that she had a Zoom meeting with the Women's Fund of Omaha (directed by Lisa Schulze) to develop the "public relations strategy" for the health standards.

So by March 16, 2021, Lisa Shulze, Board Member Neary's personal selection for the people working on the Health Education Standards had not only prepared a number of documents advocating for gender ideology and Comprehensive Sexual Education, she was now developing the "public relations strategy" for the health standards.

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Number Seven:

On approximately March 22, 2021, it appears that Ms. Neary began contacting friends to encourage them to provide positive and supportive input for draft #1.

One person even emailed Ms. Neary, stating:

“It was wonderful to talk with you on the phone yesterday and I am so glad we got to have a conversation about the proposed health standards. I **wanted to follow up and ask you to please email me the survey you mentioned.** I would like to fill it out. Thanks again for taking the time to talk with me.”

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Kangas emailed Ms. Neary once again stating that she received Ms. Neary’s email with the link to the survey.

On March 22, 2021, Board Member Neary began to encourage the NDE to bring in experts to talk to the Board about the need for LGBT sex education in the health standards. She specifically mentions her hand-picked advocate, Lisa Schultze, as well as Dr. Deb Tomek, and a parent of a transgender student as experts she would recommend for this task.

Board Member Neary reminded NDE board members and staff how she found LGBT advocates to “bring along” a couple of their fellow board members who didn’t understand some of the wording she was able to get into the nondiscrimination policy the Board had passed the previous year.

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## Number Eight:

On March 30, 2021, Board Member Neary emailed a document titled “sample talking points” to President Nickels.

This may be the “talking points” referenced by Lisa Schulze earlier in the month.

The “talking points” include many references to “THE PROCESS”, which unbeknownst to most people in this room up until now, was not being allowed to happen “organically”.

At least this is what I think many of you are now coming to realize. What was supposed to happen organically was being guided by the hands of several individuals, including at least one member of the Board of Education and Lisa Schulze.

On March 31<sup>st</sup>, Maureen Nickels emailed a set of attachments to all board members and several NDE officials which defended the sexual education in draft 1 of the standards, which included information provided by Lisa Schulze earlier in the month, including the link to suicide, which Lisa Schulze identified as being helpful in Oregon and Idaho’s advocacy efforts.

On April 15, 2021, Board Member Neary began reaching out to “facilitators” who could meet with the Board members and work on a “values” statement to supplement the nondiscrimination position statement the board had developed under Neary’s guidance several months earlier. The individuals Board Member Neary contacted seem to include one common trait, support of the LGBT lifestyle.

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Number Nine:

On April 23, 2021, Board Member Neary reached out to two members of the Board of Regents, Elizabeth O'Connor and Barbara Weitz to see how the Board of Regents dealt with public comments on controversial issues.

According to Board Member Neary, her discussions with the Regents heightened her disappointment with the way the NDE was handling the public input on the health education standards.

In an email to Tiffany Joeke at the Omaha Women's Fund on April 23, 2021, Board Member Neary stated:

*"I am very disappointed that Ryan and Maureen see this as a "both sides" need to be presented all the time. It is irresponsible in my opinion when one of the sides is based in science and fact and the other is based in religion. That is why it was important for me to learn how the Regents get around the "both sides" nonsense. They only allow 30 minutes of public testimony a month. And they do not put much emphasis at all on the public input."*

Ms. Neary represents that she had spoken to more than one Regent, but in fact, she only spoke with Elizabeth O'Connor.

Barbara Weitz did not respond to Ms. Neary's email until May 2<sup>nd</sup>, and Ms. Neary informed her on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, that Elizabeth O'Connor had answered her questions already.

Therefore, Ms. Neary only spoke with one Regent, but led others (including the other Board members) to believe that she had spoken to at least two.

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Number Ten:

On April 26<sup>th</sup>, Board Member Neary emailed President Nickels, Vice President Patsy Koch Johns, Commissioner Blomstedt, and Ryan Foor to try and get the NDE to change the way they were receiving public comment.

Board Member Neary specifically stated:

*"It is not enough to just listen to public comment. And-- I tend to think it is irresponsible if that is all that is allowed. And-- I am not only concerned about our board having the information they need-- but I also want to set the example for the local school boards. It is a horrifying thought that they would merely leave the decisions about these standards to only the public comment portion."*

At the same time Board Member Neary was attempting to bring in an LGBT advocate as a “facilitator” to help create a values statement for the Board of Education, she was trying to minimize the predominantly morally conservative message the Board was receiving from the general public, many of whom included professional educators, medical providers, counselors, and overwhelmingly, parents and grandparents of K-12 students.

This is proven even more thoroughly by Ms. Neary’s email to Ryan Foor on May 5, 2021, in which she tried to get the values statement on an upcoming agenda and stated:

**“I think the values statement is important as we make our health standards decision.”**

In a following email, Mr. Foor agreed to put the values statement on the agenda.

In text messages on May 8, 2021, Lisa Schulze and Board Member Neary make it obvious that they are not only advocating, they are “fighting” to keep as much Comprehensive Sexual Education and LGBT advocacy in the health education standards, as they can.

Board Member Neary was concerned about a 3<sup>rd</sup> Draft which was “too cleansed”.

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Number Eleven:

If things such as transparency, honesty, integrity, fairness, ethics, and professionalism still matter in Nebraska, the efforts of Board Member Deborah Neary, and the NDE's failure to protect the "process" of the health education standards has to be a serious concern for all of you.

It is obvious that the Department of Education and this Board have been influenced by a calculated effort to sway your opinion from the very beginning, actually before the first draft of the Health Education Standards was even on the minds of the teachers who would begin the first drafting.

If you thought there was a process, you now know that it was not working while you fielded the questions and comments of concerned parents and grandparents across the State.

We offer you the entirety of this Chronology, so you can see for yourselves. There are dozens of other very troubling emails which we can also provide, but I think you will agree this is enough to show a significant breach of trust, transparency, and accountability occurred during the development of these standards. Until the credibility of the state board of education and the NDE is restored, and those implicated are held accountable, Nebraska stakeholders will not accept any future consideration for the development of health education standards.