

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Education Network, Lincoln and Nebraska Leadership Meet to Strengthen Partnership between Public Schools and Community Organizations

Lincoln, NE – Public Education Network, a leading national advocate for public school reform, will host a series of meetings with national, state and local political and education leaders to discuss how public schools and community organizations can work together to improve the academic and social services available to students of Lincoln, Neb. Along with Public Education Network (PEN), Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns, Lincoln Mayor Don Wesely, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and the Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) Foundation will examine ways to compel local communities to advocate for changes in education policy at the local, state and national levels. The meetings will be held from April 2 through April 4 at the Villager Best Western, with a welcome reception at the Sheldon Art Gallery.

Lincoln is one of five communities in the country engaged in PEN's Schools and Community Initiative, a multi-million dollar effort to better coordinate and align the programs and services of numerous community organizations with schools and with each other to make services more available and accessible to students, their families and the community. In just over three years, PEN has provided Lincoln \$536,000 to better integrate social services for children available via community-based programs and academic services available in the city's public schools.

"Public engagement is at the heart of PEN's work in Lincoln and across the country," said Wendy Puriefey, president of PEN. "PEN and all of the LEFs involved in the Schools and Communities Initiative are heartened by the strong response of public officials such as Governor Mike Johanns and Mayor Don Weseley, and parents, business leaders and citizens in communities all across the country. We look forward to building even stronger partnerships nationwide that will engage communities to ensure every child has the opportunity to receive a quality public education."

In addition to about 60 representatives from local education funds (LEFs) across the country like the LPS Foundation, education luminaries like independent researcher and author Joy Dryfoos, Jane Quinn of the Children's Aid Society, and Karen Pittman of Forum for Youth Investment will participate. In addition to attending the conference itself, participants will be visiting various schools throughout Lincoln to learn from the

innovative and effective ways through which programs and supports are provided to children, youth and families before, during, and after school hours.

“As the architect of the Schools and Community Initiative, PEN is playing a vital role in select communities today to promote greater public responsibility for our public schools,” said Barbara Bartle, executive director of the LPS Foundation. “We hope that the successes we are achieving here in Lincoln, indeed every success being achieved within PEN’s network, can serve as an example for community organizations in school districts all across the country.”

In addition to the LPS Foundation, local education funds in Buffalo, N.Y., Lancaster, Pa., Paterson, N.J., and Providence, R.I., participate in the nationwide Schools and Community Initiative.

About Public Education Network

For over a decade, Public Education Network has been working to make quality education a reality for every child. Advocating for and actively working toward public school reform at the national level, PEN also supports a network of 78 local education funds (LEFs) that work on the ground with communities across the country to improve the quality of public schools district by district. Through its LEFs, PEN serves more than 10.6 million students in 30 states and the District of Columbia. Operating with the belief that greater public responsibility leads to greater reform, PEN is unique in that it focuses on engaging every member of the community to advance public school reform.

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