

THE CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR

*"Your story
starts with you.
right here."*



THE DREAM ↪ SWITCH

**Lyrics by Becky Boesen
Music by David von Kampen**

Sung by Andrea von Kampen |

**Co-produced by Blixt Locally Grown and
Nebraska Community Foundation**

**Supported by the
Peter Kiewit Foundation**



**PETER KIEWIT
FOUNDATION**

DEAR EDUCATOR,

Thank you for incorporating the arts into your classroom or educational group, using *The Dream Switch* Curriculum Guide. We are excited that *The Dream Switch* performance and community conversation is coming to your area. We hope that this guide makes it easy and fun for you to deepen your students' connection to these events, and that *The Dream Switch* can serve as a catalyst for interesting conversations, projects, and explorations in your classroom.

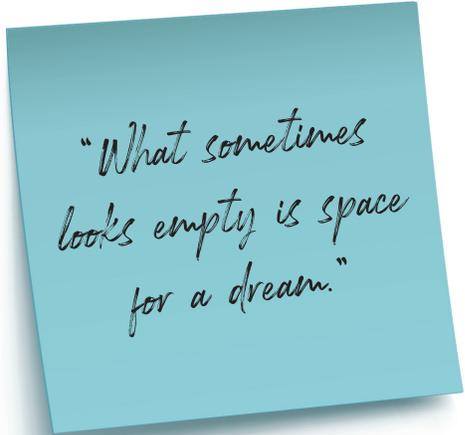
This guide is created for students of all ages with some parts geared towards particular grade levels for maximum impact. If you have any questions about *The Dream Switch*, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you again!

Warmly,

Becky and Petra, Blixt Locally Grown

NCF staff and volunteers



"What sometimes
looks empty is space
for a dream."

PART 1: INFORMATION

WHAT IS THE DREAM SWITCH PROJECT

The Dream Switch is a community building project, which includes:

- * A live performance of an original song cycle;
- * A community conversation following the performance; and
- * School/community engagement activities

The project is produced by Nebraska Community Foundation and Blixt Locally Grown, and is available to Nebraska hometowns.

THE DREAM SWITCH STORY

The Dream Switch story revolves around a young outlier from the Sandhills who decides after her first year of college in Nebraska, that her happiness awaits elsewhere. We follow her journey as she leaves home, explores the world beyond, and then comes to her own understanding that “everything I needed to be me, was around me.” (see page 4 for more details).

WHY IS IT CALLED THE DREAM SWITCH?

The song cycle is called *The Dream Switch* for a variety of reasons:

1. *The Dream Switch* is a pivotal song in the main character’s journey.
2. The idea of “turning up your dream switch” is a phrase that Nebraska Community Foundation uses to empower and inspire hometowns to think big about possibilities in their own communities.
3. Dreams play an important part in the main character’s decision making. They may make her “switch” her course!

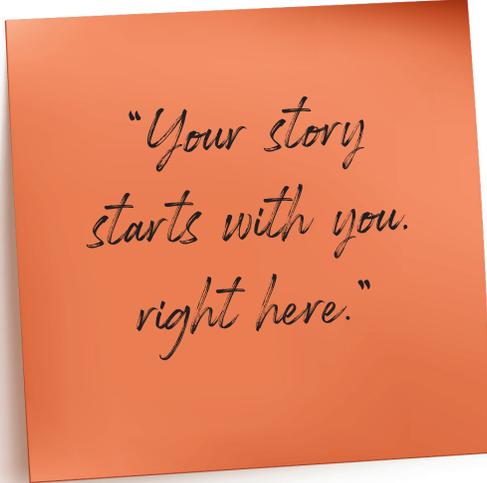
THEMES EXPLORED IN THE DREAM SWITCH

The Dream Switch song cycle is built to engage audiences around the following themes:

- * Returning to one’s home
- * Sense of place
- * Loneliness
- * Intergenerational communication
- * The complicated bonds between parents and their children
- * Inclusion and belonging
- * The power of invitation
- * What it means to live in Nebraska

HOW DO THE SONGS TELL THE STORY IN THE DREAM SWITCH?

The musicians (with lyrics sung by a singular vocalist) play the 14 songs listed below. The lyrics in the songs tell the story of a young woman who unexpectedly leaves her college in Chadron (*But for Chadron*), and goes back home briefly (*Bucket Seats*). She reminisces about Rock Eerie, a town she remembers from childhood vacations (*Rock Eerie*), and decides to start a new life there (*Brave New World*). She drives towards the Rockies (*GPS*), and arrives in Rock Eerie. She has complicated feelings about missing Nebraska but decides that she can “make it good” in her new place (*Make Good*). We follow her as she looks for a job in a local bookstore (*Job Opening – Where Do You See Yourself in 10 Years*). Her first night is haunted by strange sounds and a feeling of loneliness (*Bad Dream*). She finds her own apartment, and for a moment, enjoys doing what she likes with no complications. However, in the back of her mind, she is feeling the pull to come back to Nebraska (*Return to a Field*). After a few weeks, she receives an invitation to a party (*Fancy Mountain Party*) and feels excited by the invitation, but wonders if she truly fits in. After the party she reflects on nepotism and the importance of making one’s own way in life (*Ski Brat*). After receiving a letter from home (*The Letter*), she turns up her dream switch and envisions how she wants her life to look (*The Dream Switch*) . . .



We won't reveal the rest, but we will share the last words of the song cycle:
"Your story starts with you, right here."

WHAT IS A SONG CYCLE?

A song cycle is an album that tells a story consecutively through the composition and order of songs. It is not a play with music, but rather, audience members learn the story in a series of 14 songs. They are:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. But for Chadron | 8. Bad Dream |
| 2. Bucket Seats | 9. Return to a Field |
| 3. Rock Eerie | 10. Fancy Mountain Party |
| 4. Brave New World | 11. Ski Brat |
| 5. GPS | 12. The Letter |
| 6. Make Good | 13. The Dream Switch |
| 7. Job Opening (Where Do You See Yourself in 10 Years?) | 14. Coming Home |



PART 2: INSTRUMENTATION AND LYRICS

WHAT CAN MY STUDENTS EXPECT WHEN THEY ATTEND THE DREAM SWITCH LIVE PERFORMANCE?

The Dream Switch is performed by a vocalist, and seven musicians, who play:

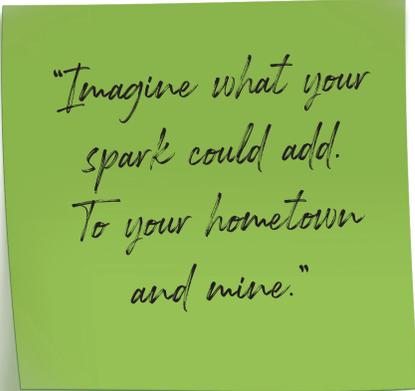
1. Piano
2. Electric bass
3. Drums
4. Violin 1
5. Violin 2
6. Cello 1
7. Cello 2

Lyricist Becky Boesen serves as the host for the performance. She will welcome the audience, and talk a little bit in between songs about the story. The music is varied and accessible—your students will hear styles ranging from musical theatre, pop, and even baroque! The tempo varies from slower songs like *Rock Eerie*, to up-tempo songs like *The Dream Switch*. Lyrics to each song will be provided in the program book, so students can follow along during the performance. Vocalist Andrea von Kampen will keep everyone mesmerized with her honest, natural, and beautiful voice.

THE INSTRUMENTATION

The instrumentation chosen for *The Dream Switch* is a fairly common orchestrational palette in a lot of contemporary musical theatre. Composer David von Kampen says, “The strings are really expressive, and the rhythm section makes everything groove. I just like the way it sounds.” We hope you do too!

Please see pages 8–10 for activities and exercises based on the lyrics of *The Dream Switch*.



“Imagine what your
spark could add.
To your hometown
and mine.”

PART 3: ABOUT THE ARTISTS/PRODUCERS

ABOUT THE WRITING TEAM

Award-winning playwright and lyricist Becky Boesen and acclaimed composer David von Kampen, who are both also teaching artists and college level educators, have been writing as a team since 2013, focusing on place making and the lifting of Nebraska stories through their shared work. Boesen and von Kampen began their journey together through the creation of their original musical *CATHERLAND*, which was championed by the Willa Cather Foundation and generously supported by Rural Futures Institute for its unique and modern look at issues pertaining to artists returning to rural Nebraska.

In 2015, Boesen and von Kampen were commissioned by the Lied Center for Performing Arts to create an original family musical that shined a light on local child hunger issues in collaboration with the Food Bank of Lincoln and the Lincoln Community Foundation, which included curriculum co-developed by Blixt Locally Grown and 5th graders at Clinton Elementary School, a Title One school in Lincoln with an over 94% backpack recipient rate. Production and related community engagement surrounded the musical. *Puddin' and the Grumble* resulted in over \$75,000 in donations to the Food Bank from local donors as well as opening doors to new and significant funding opportunities for the Food Bank going forward.

The model created, which includes a live performance, development of curriculum, collaborative community engagement and collaboration with a local food bank, has since been utilized for new productions of the musical and surrounding activities in Orlando, Florida and throughout West Virginia, with mentorship provided by Boesen to these and other interested communities. Perhaps most importantly, this project helped break down the stigma of child hunger and local poverty and began a new conversation about how we tackle the issue in Lincoln and beyond with perspective and dignity. Boesen and von Kampen were honored to be the recipient of a Lincoln Mayor's Arts Award for their shared work and also by the Academy of Arts and Letters when *Puddin' and the Grumble* was selected as a finalist for the prestigious 2016 Richard Rodgers Award.

Since 2014, Boesen and von Kampen have gone on to collaborate on a jazz album, multiple choral works including "Three Nebraska Lyrics," a commission by Chadron State College, and most recently were commissioned by the University of Nebraska to create a song in honor of the 150th Anniversary, titled "Welcome, Pioneers," which premiered at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in February 2019.

ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

Nebraska Community Foundation

Nebraska Community Foundation was established in 1994 by a group of visionaries determined to empower communities throughout the state to grow and prosper. They believed that with the right tools and resources, people could build the hometowns of their dreams. Hometowns that are poised to attract families, lay a progressive and sustainable foundation, create opportunities, emanate pride and welcome everyone.



Through philanthropy, our team helps communities develop strong local economies, high quality of life, and numerous leadership and volunteer opportunities. Our mission to unleash abundant local assets, inspire charitable giving and connect ambitious people guides our commitment to helping Greater Nebraska reach its full potential.

Serving 257 Nebraska hometowns in 82 counties, NCF's affiliated funds are led by those who best know the needs of the community—the people who call it home.

Blixt Locally Grown

Blixt Locally Grown is a nonprofit organization founded by Petra Wahlqvist and Becky Boesen, which puts the focus "high powered arts for humanity" as a meaningful tool for community building and inclusion.

Petra Wahlqvist is the producer of *The Dream Switch* Project and is a project creator, educator, and producer. She most recently served as the Education and Community Engagement Director at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. Wahlqvist also teaches in the Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film at UNL. Wahlqvist is well known throughout Greater Nebraska for her keen organizational and production skills as well as her relationship-focused approach. She is the President and Co-Founder of Blixt Locally Grown. (www.blixt.space).

Since 2014, and working alongside school systems and nonprofit collaborators, Wahlqvist and Boesen have brought live theatre and related social and emotional focused education and engagement to over 3,200 students of all ages throughout Lincoln and Greater Nebraska.

PART 4: ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISES

VOCABULARY FROM THE DREAM SWITCH

Here is a list of words or expressions from *The Dream Switch* that may be unfamiliar to your students, depending on their grade level:

Bad news personified	The embodiment of an annoying, disturbing, or unwelcome thing
Outwore my welcome	Stayed too long
Upholstery	The materials used to cushion and cover furniture, like a car seat
Excessively	More than what is necessary, too much
Scenery	Surroundings or landscape
Repercussions	Widespread, indirect, or unforeseen effect of an action
Cataclysm	A momentous event marked by overwhelming upheaval and demolition (broadly: an event that brings great changes)
Vacancy	A vacant (empty/open) position, office, or property
Revolting	Rebelling
Crippling debt	A debt that makes it hard to make ends meet
Peace Corps	Trained personnel sent as volunteers abroad to provide technical assistance and promote mutual understanding
Novella	A work of fiction, intermediate in length (between a short story and a novel)
Bizarre	Odd or eccentric
Interloping	Intruding
Hors d'oeuvres	Fancy name for appetizers
Adieu	Good bye
A grand affair	A fancy event
Evinced	Demonstrated, manifested
Nepotism	The unfair practice of someone famous or powerful to give jobs or other favors to relatives
Squander	To use up carelessly
Obscure	Having an intentionally veiled meaning
Elitist	To have an offensive air of superiority
Tattered	Torn or worn out
Authentic	Honest, true to self

LITERARY CONNECTIONS

The main character in *The Dream Switch* dreams of being a writer. She references many classical and Nebraska works and authors in the lyrics. Here is a list of these references:

From *Brave New World*

Anna Karenina,
Wuthering Heights
Heart of Darkness,
Sense and Sensibility,
A girl from the Sandhills
With a pen in her hand,
And a fire in her belly,
The next Mary Shelley . . .
So long, Great Expectations.
Hello, Brave New World.

From *The Dream Switch*

Cather and Kooser and Pipher and Pound,
They better make space cuz I am coming back around!



AUTHORS AND TITLES EXERCISES!

For Elementary and Middle School students: Can you identify which of the authors below are from Nebraska?

Leo Tolstoy
Joseph Conrad
Mary Pipher
Mary Shelley
Jane Austen
Ted Kooser
Aldous Huxley
Louise Pound
Charles Dickens
Emily Bronte
Willa Cather

(Answers: Willa Cather, Ted Kooser, Mary Pipher, Louise Pound)



For High School students: Can your students match the work to the correct author?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Wuthering Heights | A. Leo Tolstoy |
| 2. Sense and Sensibility | B. Joseph Conrad |
| 3. Frankenstein | C. Mary Pipher |
| 4. Great Expectations | D. Mary Shelley |
| 5. Local Wonders | E. Jane Austen |
| 6. Reviving Ophelia | F. Ted Kooser |
| 7. Brave New World | G. Aldous Huxley |
| 8. Anna Karenina | H. Louise Pound |
| 9. Heart of Darkness | I. Charles Dickens |
| 10. The Deserted Village | J. Willa Cather |
| 11. My Antonia | K. Emily Bronte |

(Answers: 1K, 2E, 3D, 4I, 5F, 6C, 7G, 8A, 9B, 10H, 11J)

PART 5: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discussion questions to explore before the performance:

1. Looking at the song titles, which one/s speak to you the most? Why?
2. How do you think writers choose the names of their songs?
3. Have you ever heard a song cycle before? If so, which one?
4. *The Dream Switch* deals with themes of staying, returning, and being a newcomer in a community. What is the story for you and your family in relation to the community where you live now?
5. Where do you feel most at home in your community?
6. Where do you not feel welcome?
7. Complete this sentence: The thing about my hometown is . . . ”
8. The sky is the limit! What would make your hometown even better?

Discussion questions to explore after the performance:

(Helpful hint: You might suggest that students keep a copy of their program book and bring it in as a reference for follow up discussions.)

1. In *The Dream Switch*, our main character wants to be a writer. She makes many literary references in the different songs, to famous writers, Nebraska writers, and classic titles. Which ones did you notice?

2. Our character has a passion for writing. Do you have a passion you are following?

3. The song lyrics contain many references to Nebraska and things that are distinctly Nebraskan. Which Nebraska references do you remember? Which resonated particularly with you?

4. Do you imagine a name for the main character? If so, what is it? Why do you think we don't learn her name?

5. *Go big and go home*

At the end of the song cycle, the main character says, "Go big AND go home." How does this change the meaning of the saying "Go big or go home?"

6. *Keep your head up*

When our main character faces challenging situations, she hears her mother's voice tell her "Keep your head up." Do you have a mantra or saying that helps you when things are difficult?

7. *I've got big things to say.*

Have you got big things to say too? What are they?

8. *If my future's so important, why can't I see it?*

Do you feel like you can see your future? Do you feel pressure to see your future?

9. *My family's lived right here*

For at least 100 years.

And staying near the farm has been

A thing they want from me.

Do you feel that there are expectations from people around you about your future? If so, how do you feel about these expectations?



10. *What would people say?*

Most of them think,

That I'll never amount,

To anything special anyway.

Do you worry about what people think about you? Do you sometimes feel like you are being underestimated?

11. *If you ever change your mind,*

You can always come back home

Do you feel that it is easy to change your mind? Why or why not?

12. *Job Opening (Where Do You See Yourself in 10 Years)?*

Do you enjoy answering the question "Where do you see yourself in 10 years?" Why or why not?

13. *Home is a place where special things happen.*

What sometimes looks empty is space for a dream.

What could be filled by a dream in your hometown?

14. *This whole grown up thing isn't quite what it seems.*

So . . . overrated.

What do you feel about becoming a grown up?

15. *This farm isn't L.A.*

But there are people here,

Who dream big dreams,

And have cool things to say,

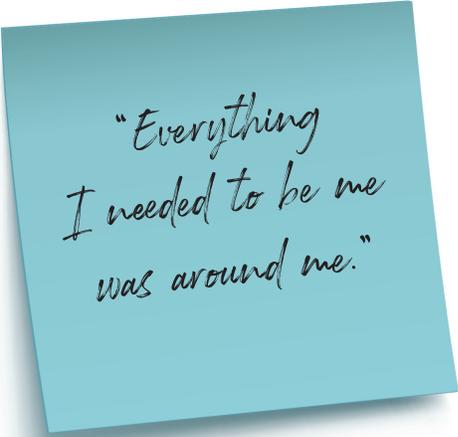
Making space for thinkers,

And for those who really shine.

Just imagine what your spark could add,

To your hometown and mine.

What do you feel your spark could add to your hometown?



*"Everything
I needed to be me
was around me."*

16. *Go on and build you bright new future,
Take the time you need to roam,
And when you're done,
Follow the sun,
It shines for you back home.
If I wasn't clear,
We want you here . . ."*

Does it make a difference to know that you are wanted in a place? Do you feel wanted in your hometown? If yes, in what way? If not, why not? If not, is there another place where you feel wanted?

17. *I thought failures stay.
But thinking like that,
Got in my way.*

In what way do you think this way of thinking got in the way for our main character? Is this a common way of thinking? If so, how does that affect how you think about the choices for your future?

18. *I've got thoughts to share
and people who care,
Ideas to pitch.*

What ideas do you have to pitch?

19. *Doesn't matter how you get there,
Don't give up on yourself,
Or the home that your heart belongs to.
Because your story starts with you,
Right here*

How does your story start?

PART 6: CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

NEBRASKA FINE ARTS STANDARDS

You can find a full list of the Nebraska Fine Arts Standards at the Nebraska Department of Education's website at <http://www.education.ne.gov/FineArts/index.html>.

THEATRE

Create

FA 5.5.1.f Show a character using body movement.

FA 8.5.1.f Use movement in conjunction with extraneous sounds and short phrases to demonstrate two distinct characters.

Perform

FA 5.5.2.a Demonstrate expressive reading using vocal variety.

FA 5.5.2.b Demonstrate characters through movement.

FA 5.5.2.g Identify one's own vocal and physical choices in expressing an emotion or idea.

FA 8.5.2.c Rehearse and portray, in small groups, characters within a defined "where."

Respond

FA 5.5.3.a Demonstrate respect for self and others (etiquette) in dramatic activities.

FA 8.5.3.a Construct, share, and use audience code of conduct including appropriate audience behavior and respect for physical space.

Connect

FA 5.5.4.b Recognize how performances reflect everyday circumstances (e.g., historical events, natural disasters, family relationships).

FA 5.5.4.f Understand the concept of intellectual property.

MUSIC

Create

FA 2.4.1.d Connect music to personal experience through creating.

FA 5.4.1.d Connect music to historical and cultural contexts and the arts through creating.

FA 8.4.1.b Create, evaluate, and refine musical ideas that utilize a variety of compositional devices (e.g., form, imitation).

FA 12.4.1.b Create, evaluate, and refine musical ideas that actualize creative intent with increasing craftsmanship.



Perform

FA 2.4.2.c Perform music using correct rhythm, pitch, and dynamics. Demonstrate appropriate performance expectations

FA 5.4.2.c Perform (formally or informally) music using correct posture, breath control, rhythm, pitch, and dynamics. Demonstrate appropriate performance expectations.

FA 8.4.2.b Develop and refine solo/ensemble performance skills using guided self-evaluation and feedback from others.

FA 12.4.2.b Develop and refine solo/ensemble performance skills evaluation using self-evaluation and feedback from others.

Respond

FA 2.4.3.a Experience music from a variety of familiar and unfamiliar sources.

FA 5.4.3.b Identify and describe how elements of music are used by a performer or creator.

FA 8.4.3.a Select appropriate music of contrasting styles to listen to or perform.

FA 12.4.3.b Analyze and evaluate how the performer/creator uses composition and performance characteristics to convey expressive intent.

CORE SUBJECT OR CONTENT STANDARDS

The Nebraska Standards can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education website – <http://www.education.ne.gov/>.

SOCIAL STUDIES

GEOGRAPHY: THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS

SS 5.3.1: Students will explore where (spatial) and why people, places, and environments are organized in the United States

SS 5.3.1.c: Analyze why things are located where they are in the United States

GEOGRAPHY: PLACES AND REGIONS

SS 8.3.2: Students will examine how regions form and change over time

SS 8.3.2.c: Analyze change in places and regions over time

GEOGRAPHY: HUMAN SYSTEMS

SS 3.3.4: Students will compare and contrast the characteristics of culture locally

SS 3.3.4.b: Compare and contrast the spread and diffusion of cultural traits (e.g., spread of ideas, languages, religions, people, goods, customs, traditions)

SS 5.3.4: Students will compare, contrast, and draw conclusions about the characteristics of culture and migration in the United States

SS 5.3.4.c: Compare and contrast historical and present day migrations to and within the United States

HISTORY: CHRONOLOGICAL THINKING

SS 4.4.1: Students will examine chronological relationships and patterns, and describe the connections among them

SS 4.4.1.d: Examine the chronology of historical events in Nebraska and their impact on the past, present and future

HISTORY: HISTORICAL COMPREHENSION

SS 2.4.2: Students will describe the development of people, events, ideas, and symbols over time



*"If you ever change
your mind.
You can always come
back home."*