



NEWS RELEASE

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ALICE BUFFETT MAGNET MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER NAMED NEBRASKA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Lee Perez, an English as a Second Language teacher in grades 5-8th at Alice Buffett Magnet Middle School in Omaha, was named the Nebraska 2022 Teacher of the Year during a surprise award presentation today.

Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matthew Blomstedt presented the award.

Perez was one of four finalists for the Nebraska Teacher of the Year award. Mikayla Bruner of Westside Middle School in Omaha, Abby Jones of Gibbon High School in Gibbon, and Kim Pickering of Lincoln High School in Lincoln were also finalists and will be recognized as Award of Excellence winners.

Perez began his teaching career in 2008 at Marris Magnet Middle School in Omaha where he taught a 7th grade World Studies-Dual Language Program until 2019. He then moved to Alice Buffett Magnet Middle School where he currently teaches 5-8th grade English as a Second Language.

In addition to his classroom experience, Perez is an active member in the community belonging to many organizations including the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, the Omaha Education Association Metro Board, the Nebraska State Education Association, and the English Learner Curriculum Pathway Committee for Omaha Public Schools. Perez has also been honored with several teaching awards and featured in several publications for his work as a teacher.

In the classroom Perez has unique challenges teaching English Language Learners and he takes a comprehensive approach to reach his students by combining culturally responsive teaching and language learning engagement strategies. In doing this, Perez teaches his students a new language but also a new culture while celebrating their own backgrounds and cultures in the classroom.

"It is important to embrace diversity. We should acknowledge that being different is special and these differences should be showcased during learning," Perez said in his application. "Good teaching isn't always about effective lesson planning, data, assessments, or observations with administrators. It's about empowering our students to strive to be the best versions of themselves socially, emotionally, intellectually, and academically."

Perez said his message to teachers is to be kind, culturally aware, and tolerant and that kindness should be our new 'pandemic'.

Perez has been a teacher for 13 years and earned a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

A panel of Nebraska educators selected Perez as the 2022 Nebraska Teacher of the Year. The Teacher of the Year program recognizes the contributions of classroom teachers who are exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, skilled, and who have the ability to inspire students of all backgrounds and abilities to learn.

Perez, Bruner, Jones and Pickering will be honored by the Nebraska State Board of Education at a luncheon in the future.

Perez will participate in the National Teacher of the Year competition later this year.

Photos of the Nebraska Teacher of the Year and Award of Excellence winners are available using the following link.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1e9aWOajG8GpqJm6AGE2aoUZ6wsdDxM3w?usp=sharing>

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