



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Aurora Middle School Teacher Named Nebraska Teacher of the Year**

Scott Phillips, a 7<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher at Aurora Middle School was named the 2024 Nebraska Teacher of the Year during a surprise award presentation today.

Nebraska Commissioner of Education Brian Maher presented the award.

Phillips was one of three finalists for the Nebraska Teacher of the Year award. Shelly Mowinkel of Milford High School and Amy Page of Forest Station Elementary School in Omaha were also finalists and will be recognized as Award of Excellence winners.

Phillips has worked at Aurora his entire career starting in 2010. He has taught 7<sup>th</sup> grade math, Pre-Algebra, and a math intervention program. Phillips is also an adjunct instructor at Doane University.

In addition to his time in the classroom, Phillips is involved in the Aurora community, is a member of the National Education Association, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and the Nebraska State Education Association. Phillips also coaches basketball and works as a mentor in the school.

In the classroom Phillips seemingly does the impossible, he gets his students excited about math while having fun learning it. Phillips challenges himself to consistently engage students while also allowing them to work collaboratively through the productive struggle of the learning process. He fully acknowledges math is one of the few subjects that has an emotional attachment to the confidence level of students and that often times people either love or hate math and fail to see the real-world connection. Phillips uses high energy activities, music, and games to interact with his students along with videos that show how math is used in everyday life.

"By the time students reach 7th grade they already have an emotional attachment to how math makes them feel," Phillips said in his application. "They consider themselves "good" or "bad" at math and oftentimes it's solely based on their past experiences in elementary school or misconceptions from parents. I may not be able to get every student to believe they're great at math, but I aim to see an increase in their perseverance, problem solving strategies, and ultimately their confidence in themselves."

Phillips says his main goals as Teacher of the Year will be to help promote excellence as a habit, encourage a healthy balance in life, and to not be afraid to fail but instead, let failure lead to growth. He also wants to promote the teaching profession to inspire new teachers and to remind veteran teachers why they chose to be a teacher.

Phillips has been a teacher for 13 years and earned a bachelor's degree in Middle Level Education from the University of Nebraska at Kearney and a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Doane University.

A panel of Nebraska educators selected Phillips as the 2024 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.

Phillips, Mowinkel, and Page will be honored by the Nebraska State Board of Education at a reception in November.

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

***Photos of the Nebraska Teacher of the Year are available using the following link.***

<https://adobe.ly/3sXQeWm>

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