



## NEWS RELEASE

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# LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER NAMED NEBRASKA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Renee Jones, an English teacher at Lincoln High school, was named the Nebraska 2023 Teacher of the Year during a surprise award presentation today.

Nebraska Commissioner of Education Matthew Blomstedt presented the award.

Jones began her teaching career in 2014 in California before moving to Nebraska in 2015 to teach English at Bryan Community Focus Program in Lincoln. In 2021 Jones moved to Lincoln High where she teaches English in Oral Communications and works with students through reading interventions.

In addition to her classroom experience, Jones is an active member of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and Kiwanis International. She is also a published author, a South by Southwest EDU presenter and has received several scholarships for continuing education. Jones also received the Lincoln Public Schools Foundation Inspire Award in 2019.

In the classroom, Jones helps students face one of the greatest fears in America. Surveys have shown that 25 percent of the population ranks speaking in front of an audience as their biggest fear. As an Oral Communications teacher, Jones tackles that challenge through the use of personal connections. She helps students overcome their fears by connecting directly with them, but also helping them connect with their peers.

“Connecting students is the most influential and important element of my role as a teacher,” Jones said in her application. “Connecting students with me, with their peers, and with themselves, is at the heart of gaining the confidence they need.”

Jones said building connections leads to success not just in her classroom but throughout life. Her message as Teacher of the Year builds on that idea. As an education community, teachers and schools have an opportunity to rebuild systems and relationships coming out of the pandemic. She wants to challenge everyone to build as many connections as possible and will work to reignite the spark of education in her colleagues.

Jones has been a teacher for eight years and earned a bachelor’s degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and a master’s degree in Educational Leadership at Doane University.

A panel of Nebraska educators selected Jones as the 2023 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.

Jones will be honored by the Nebraska State Board of Education at an event in the near future.

Jones 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://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zYhlo52ZAwHNeK39-Z2tnkaxnQS1eelX?usp=sharing>

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