



NEWS RELEASE

For additional information, please contact David Jespersen by phone (402-471-4537) or email (david.jespersen@nebraska.gov)

MARCH 16, 2026

Nebraska World Language Distinguished Scholars Recognized

The Nebraska Department of Education is proud to honor 46 students with the Distinguished World Language Scholar Award during World Language Week 2026. These students have demonstrated outstanding leadership in language learning, sustained commitment to language study, appreciation for cultural diversity, and strong communicative competence. Nominated by their teachers, each student submitted a portfolio highlighting their achievements.

NDE World Language Education also recognizes 33 students with the Student Language Spotlight Award, which highlights exceptional learning evidence from world language classrooms across Nebraska. This award continues its tradition of celebrating students' language proficiency and cultural understanding.

"I believe learning a world language is crucial for connecting cultures, opening opportunities to form new relationships, and gaining knowledge about how the world works," said Averie Andersen, a Distinguished World Language Scholar.

Inspired by these achievements, we invite all students to take part in the 2027 Nebraska World Language Week, scheduled for February 8–14, to celebrate the power of language, explore its impact, and connect with cultures around the world.

For more information about World Language Week, the Student Language Spotlight Award, and the World Language Distinguished Scholar Award, visit: <https://www.education.ne.gov/worldlanguage/world-language-week/>.

Student Language Spotlight

Chinese Language Learning

Alexis Nguyen, Video Recording, Level 1, Middle School, Nathan Hale Middle School, *Lifen Li* (Teacher)

Chudier Gatluak, Book, Level 2, High School, Marian High School, *Sicong Mills* (Teacher)

Cora Rudish, Video Recording, Level 1, Middle School, Nathan Hale Middle School, *Lifen Li* (Teacher)

Enyu Wang, Craft, Heritage Level 2, Elementary, LCCA- Lincoln Chinese/ Morly Elementary, *Zheyang Li* (Teacher)

Eric Lay, Project, Level 1, Middle School, Nathan Hale Middle School, *Lifen Li* (Teacher)

Ernest Xie, Art Work, Heritage Level 2, Elementary, LCCA- Lincoln Chinese, *Zheyang Li* (Teacher)

Eva Fonkeng, Presentation, Level 1, Middle School, Nathan Hale Middle School, *Lifen Li* (Teacher)

Eva Stamp, Video Recording, Level 3, High School, Marian High School, *Sicong Mills* (Teacher)

Isaac Jaberian Doraji, Writing, Level 1, High School, Lincoln North Star High School, *Chun-yi Coral Su* (Teacher)

Merilyn Ho, Writing, Level 3, High School, Lincoln North Star High School, *Chun-yi Coral Su* (Teacher)

Naw Sue, Project, Level 1, Middle School, Nathan Hale Middle School, *Lifen Li* (Teacher)

Nebaria Kody, Poster, Level 1, High School, Marian High School, *Sicong Mills* (Teacher)

Piper Schroeder, Poster, Level 4, High School, Marian High School, *Sicong Mills* (Teacher)

Suzy Hanley, Writing, Level 4, High School, Lincoln North Star High School, *Chun-yi Coral Su* (Teacher)

Tin Myo Hlaing, Video Recording, Level 1, Middle School, Nathan Hale Middle School, *Lifen Li* (Teacher)

Uyen Nguyen, Writing, Level 2, High School, Lincoln North Star High School, *Chun-yi Coral Su* (Teacher)

German Language Learning

Eleanor Erickson, Writing, Level 4, High School, Lincoln High School, *Marissa Wanamaker* (Teacher)

Isaiah Nomiya, Audio Recording, Level 4, High School, Bellevue West High School, *Amanda Messerschmitt* (Teacher)

Piper Tischner, Grammar Quiz, Level 3, High School, Lincoln High School, *Marissa Wanamaker* (Teacher)

Velma Haffey, Project, Level 1, High School, Lincoln High School, *Marissa Wanamaker* (Teacher)

Verity Wegener, Audio Recording, Level 5+, High School, Lincoln High School, *Marissa Wanamaker* (Teacher)

Spanish Language Learning

Amy Delacruz, Project, Level 2, High School, Schuyler Central High School, Alexis Wilch (Teacher)

Beau Parsons, Project, Level 5, Elementary, Schuyler Elementary School, *Evelyn Recinos* (Teacher)

Caleb Morente, Comic, Level 5, Elementary, Schuyler Elementary School, Evelyn Recinos (Teacher)

Emelia Morrison, Project, Level 1, High School, Neligh-Oakdale High School, Christina Schroeder (Teacher)

Kaleb Corral, Project, Level 1, High School, Schuyler Central High School, Alexis Wilch (Teacher)

Madalyn Mendez, Project, Level 2, High School, Schuyler Central High School, Alexis Wilch (Teacher)

Madelyn Brown, Project, Level 2, High School, Boyd County Public Schools, Christina Schroeder (Teacher)

Olive Solberg, Presentation, Level 1, Middle School, Westside Middle School, Kelly Schulz (Teacher)

Rylee Tillema, Presentation, Level 2, High School, Neligh-Oakdale High School, Christina Schroeder (Teacher)

Sam O'Keefe, Project, Level 1, Middle School, Saint Patrick's Catholic School, Sally Johnson (Teacher)

Thomas Lampert, Project, Level 4, High School, Creighton Preparatory School, Gwen Fisher (Teacher)

Vanessa Villafuerte-Garcia, Project, Level 1, High School, Boyd County High School, Christina Schroeder (Teacher)

Distinguished World Language Scholar Award – High Honor

Arabic Language Learning

All?m Ahmed, Arabic Intermediate Mid (Heritage Level 3), High School (Public School), Lincoln Northeast high school, *Nael Hijjo* (Teacher)

Sajjad Al far’ani, Arabic Intermediate Low (Heritage Level 2), High School (Public School), Lincoln Northeast high school, *Nael Hijjo* (Teacher)

Wajiha Hussein, Arabic Intermediate High (Heritage Level 4), Middle School (Public School), Culler Middle School, *Nael Hijjo* (Teacher)

Chinese Language Learning

Aiman Alam, Chinese Novice (Level 1 & Level 2), High School (Private School), Marian High School, *Sicong Mills* (Teacher)

Alexander Ge, Chinese Intermediate Mid (Heritage-Level 3), High School (Non-public), LCCA- Lincoln Chinese/ Lincoln East High School, *Yanqiu Xu* (Teacher)

Anh Bui, Chinese Novice (Level 1 & 2), High School (Public School, Lincoln North Star High School, *Chun-yi Coral Su* (Teacher)

Ashley Salinas Mendoza, Chinese Novice (Level 1 & Level 2), High School (Public School), Omaha South High School, *Gao Min Palmer* (Teacher)

Cynthia Alvarado Roman, Chinese Novice (Level 3 & Level 4), High School (Public School), Omaha South High School, *Gao Min Palmer* (Teacher)

Enyu Wang, Chinese Intermediate Low (Heritage-Level 2), Elementary (Non-public School), LCCA- Lincoln Chinese/ Morly Elementary, *Zheyang Li* (Teacher)

Kelsey Jerrera, Chinese Novice (Level 3 & Level 4), High School (Private School), Marian High School, *Sicong Mills* (Teacher)

McKinley Fritz, Chinese Novice (Level 3 & Level 4), High School (Private School), Marian High School, *Sicong Mills* (Teacher)

Tomasa Xon, Chinese Novice (Level 1 & Level 2), High School (Public School), Omaha South High School, *Gao Min Palmer* (Teacher)

French Language Learning

Ruth Rivera, French Intermediate Low (Level 3 & Level 4), High School (Public School), Omaha Central High School, *Micah Ringlein* (Teacher)

German Language Learning

Haley Hojnacke, German Intermediate Mid (Level 5+, AP, or IB), High School (Public School), Omaha Central High School,

Erica Meyer (Teacher)

Spanish Language Learning

Alejandra Lopez Martinez, Spanish Intermediate High (Heritage Level 3&4), High School (Private School), Scotus Central Catholic High School, *Lorena Miya* (Teacher)

Claire Van Fleet, Spanish Intermediate Low (Level 3&4), High School (Private School), Norfolk Catholic High School (ESU5), *Kelly Garcia* (Teacher)

Daniela Marroquin Franco, Spanish Intermediate Low (Heritage Levels 1&2), High School (Public School), Bryan High School, *Carmen Lazo* (Teacher)

Emelyn Trejo Nuñez, Spanish Intermediate High (Heritage Level 3&4), High School (Public School), Elmwood-Murdock Junior/High School, *Manuel Camina* (Teacher)

Kendall Matteo, Spanish Novice (Level 1 &2) , High School (Public School), Norfolk Senior High School, *Elsa Sosa-Glasford* (Teacher)

Masumi Ueda, Spanish Intermediate Low (Heritage Level 3), Middle School (Public School), Westside Middle School, Kelly Schulz (Teacher)

Riley Ross, Spanish Intermediate Low (Level 3&4), High School (Public School), Wisner-Pilger High School , *Lia Raabe* (Teacher)

Ruihan Jiang, Spanish Intermediate Low (Level 3&4), High School (Public School), Lincoln Northwest High School, *Danielle Fulcher* (Teacher)

Stantiago Flores Gomez, Spanish Intermediate Low (Heritage Level 3), Middle School (Public School), Elkhorn North Ridge Middle School, *Alicia Dallman Shoemaker* (Teacher)

Sylas Delmont, Spanish Intermediate Low (Level 3&4), High School (Public School), Wisner-Pilger High School, *Lia Raabe* (Teacher)

Distinguished World Language Scholar Award – Honor

Chinese Language Learning

Abby Pham, Chinese Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), Lincoln North Star High School, *Coral Su* (Teacher)

Daniel Wang, Chinese Novice (Heritage-Level 1), Elementary (Non-public School), LCCA- Lincoln Chinese/Kooser Elementary school, *Aichun Hu* (Teacher)

French Language Learning

Manyiel Manyiel, French Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), Lincoln Northwest High School, *Jorge Ortega Roman* (Teacher)

Sid Moennig, French Intermediate Low (Level 3&4), High School (Public School), Omaha Central High School, *Micah Ringlein* (Teacher)

German Language Learning

Cameron Smith, German Intermediate Low (Level 3&4), High School (Public School), Omaha Central High School, *Erica Meyer* (Teacher)

Sarah Kelley, German Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), Millard North High School, *Wendy Brennan* (Teacher)

Spanish Language Learning

Annlyn Wilson, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), South Platte High School, *Katherine Sylvester* (Teacher)

Anthony Nunes, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), Elementary (Public School), South Platte Elementary School, *Gladys Einspahr-Sylvester* (Teacher)

Audrey Moorhead, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), South Platte High School, *Katherine Sylvester* (Teacher)

Beau Parsons, Spanish Intermediate High (Heritage Level 3&4), Elementary (Public School), Schuyler Elementary School, *Evelyn Recinos* (Teacher)

Benson Beal, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), Elementary (Public School), South Platte Elementary School, *Gladys Einspahr-Sylvester* (Teacher)

Brylie Mathis, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), Elementary (Public School), South Platte Elementary School, *Gladys Einspahr-Sylvester* (Teacher)

Emalee Armstrong, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), South Platte High School, *Katherine Sylvester* (Teacher)

Emily Mulhollen, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), South Platte High School, *Gladys Einspahr-Sylvester* (Teacher)

Isis Trujillo, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), Elementary (Public School), South Platte Elementary School, *Gladys Einspahr-Sylvester* (Teacher)

Jared Scherbarth, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), South Platte High School, *Katherine Sylvester* (Teacher)

Kanoa Leivas, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), South Platte High School, *Gladys Einspahr-Sylvester* (Teacher)

Karcidee Schwartz, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), Elementary (Public School), South Platte Elementary School, *Gladys Einspahr-Sylvester* (Teacher)

Mohammed Khamruddin, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), Middle School (Public School), Elkhorn North Ridge Middle School, *Kristin John* (Teacher)

Nora Christensen, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), Elementary (Public School), South Platte Elementary School, *Gladys Einspahr-Sylvester* (Teacher)

Skye Trujillo, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), South Platte High School, *Gladys Einspahr-Sylvester* (Teacher)

Victor Ramos, Spanish Novice (Level 1&2), High School (Public School), Meridian High School, *Maria Nieves Ruiz*

(Teacher)

Acknowledgements

The Nebraska Department of Education World Language extends sincere appreciation to the many partners, educators, and contributors whose collaboration made Nebraska World Language Week 2026 possible.

NDE gratefully acknowledges Educational Service Unit 5 and Omaha Public Schools for their support in expanding world language learning opportunities across the state. Special recognition is extended to Dr. Nick Ziegler, whose leadership during Spanish Day connected approximately 1,100 students from more than 40 school districts in a shared, statewide online learning experience.

Appreciation is also extended to the dedicated session facilitators and presenters who contributed to the week's Spanish, French, German, Chinese, and World Cultures programming. Their expertise and generosity enriched learning for Nebraska students and educators.

NDE World Language further acknowledges the Distinguished World Language Scholar Award submission reviewers, whose careful and thoughtful evaluation supported a fair and rigorous review process.

Gratitude is extended to world language teachers statewide for their ongoing commitment to multilingual learners, their efforts in nominating students for statewide recognition, and their dedication to high-quality language instruction.

Recognition is also given to the students, honored with the Distinguished World Language Scholar Award and the Student Language Spotlight Award. Their achievements demonstrate a strong commitment to language learning and contribute to a vibrant multilingual future for Nebraska.

The Nebraska Department of Education World Language also announces that Nebraska Language Week 2027 will be held February 8–14.

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David Jespersen
Public Information Officer, Nebraska Department of Education
402-471-4537
david.jespersen@nebraska.gov
@NDE_News