



SYDNEY JENSEN

2019 NEBRASKA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Sydney is a ninth grade English teacher and has taught at Lincoln High School since 2014. She started her teaching career as a seventh and eighth grade English teacher at Dawes Middle School. In addition to her classroom experience, she is an Instructional Coach and certified Trainer of Trainers for the Classroom Instruction that Works model. Sydney is an Instructional Team Leader for the English Professional Learning Community. She has also been awarded a Golden Telephone Award from Lincoln High and the 2018 Lincoln Public Schools Inspire Educator Award. She has been a teacher for five years and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia and is pursuing a master's degree from Doane University.

She wrote in her Teacher of the Year application that "teaching is a passion built out of curiosity, discovery, and the desire to never stop learning."

"I tell my students that I am a teacher because it is what my soul craves," Jensen wrote. "As a teacher I want my students to happen upon moments of curiosity and discovery. I believe that students learn when presented with authentic opportunities to discuss and process new concepts in a way that provides academic content in partnership with development of soft skills like social awareness, empathy, and communication. We absolutely must push ourselves to try new strategies, no matter how far outside of our comfort zones. This is the same message we want for our students—live and learn courageously."

SYDNEY JENSEN

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QUOTES FROM SYDNEY

“Teaching should be something that we do with open doors, sharpening one another and sharing our strengths and our weaknesses.”

“Engagement is the great equalizer. It is the pathway to narrowing the achievement gap for students from all circumstances.”

“My message to all teachers is that we have to teach courageously for the sake of our students. We absolutely must push ourselves to try new strategies, no matter how far outside of our comfort zones. This is the same message we want for our students – live and learn courageously.”

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The National Teacher of the Year Program is run by the Council of Chief State School Officers.



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Ninth Grade English Teacher
Lincoln High School
Lincoln, Nebraska

WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS



ENGAGEMENT/PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO RESPOND

We know how vital it is for students to process their learning in order to fully absorb the concepts, but it is sometimes difficult to know what our students are thinking. When teachers present students with more opportunities to talk about their learning with their peers, teachers are better able to formatively assess and use those assessments to drive instruction. Additionally, students learn communication skills, academic vocabulary, and see learning as a social activity. Experience the strategies first hand that have transformed Sydney Jensen's classroom routines and culture. Come and learn from both her successes and failures.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH FEEDBACK

One of the most time-consuming tasks that teachers face is the process of providing feedback. Often, we spend hours writing or typing feedback on assignments only to find it on our floor a few minutes after the bell. Teachers have the power to use their feedback not only to provide next steps to our students, but also to foster positive relationships with students. This session will focus on how teachers can use the feedback to build confidence in students as learners, increase engagement, and create a positive learning community.



BUILDING A CULTURE OF COACHING

Leaders in education know that everyone needs a coach, but the logistics of developing a culture of instructional coaching can be challenging to navigate. Jensen is a member of a three person instructional coaching cohort seeking to shift the culture at Lincoln High using this strategy. Over the past two years, she has learned that the first step to creating a culture that accepts coaching for all teachers—new and veteran, struggling and thriving alike—is to take an affirmative approach. This session is geared towards administrators seeking to implement coaching as an essential part of professional development in their buildings/districts.

LEARNING WALKS TO OPEN DOORS

Teaching can often feel like something we do in private. We teach behind closed doors, not knowing what is happening in the classroom next door or down the hall. This element of mystery can lead us to feel as if we are the only struggling teacher in our school. Teaching can even feel like a competition, but it should be something that we do with open doors, sharpening one another and sharing our strengths and our weaknesses. As Jim Knight says, "when teachers stop learning, so do students." Watching our peers teach to their strengths is an excellent way to improve personal practices and strengthen culture building-wide. This session will outline a structure for implementing learning walks as a way to facilitate more frequent teacher-to-teacher observations.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT STRATEGY

John Hattie's research on effect size is enlightening to all districts striving to make every moment (and dollar) count. His research shows that purely having technology exist in a classroom does not highly impact student achievement. This is because teachers have to change their instruction with the technology for it to truly make a difference. This workshop will focus on aiding teachers in choosing the right strategy to teach or measure their learning objectives by subscribing to the three E's of technology: is it efficient, effective, and engaging?