



RENEE JONES

2023 NEBRASKA TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Renee Jones is an English teacher at Lincoln High School. 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.

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PROGRAM ADMINISTERED BY

Nebraska Department of Education

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English Teacher
Lincoln High School
Lincoln, Nebraska

WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS



CELEBRATING TEACHER AUTHENTICITY

Spoken first by Theodore Roosevelt, "Comparison is the thief from joy" is a common phrase that, at times, provides self-doubt among educators. Comparison, if we let it, has the ability to take away the pride we feel in our own accomplishments as professionals. This self-doubt can build internally through many avenues. Comparing ourselves to others while visually looking down the hall or behind a screen can be a dangerous habit to get into. In this talk, I celebrate the uniqueness of each educator and acknowledge how important that is to our students. I provide internal reflection questions that encourage educators to show up authentically, on purpose, each day.



CONNECTION BEFORE CURRICULUM - THE CONNECTED CLASSROOM

Connection is the fundamental tool needed to support academic success in our classrooms. Intentionally leading with connection changes the dynamic of our learning environments. In this talk, I discuss the importance of human connection in our classroom, including the benefits of teacher-to-student connection and student-to-student connection. I provide five tangible techniques fellow educators can adapt and use in their classrooms.



BUT, WHAT'S IT LIKE?

There is no doubt that there is an extreme frequency of buzz centered around the teaching profession. Is it really as bad as they say it is? Will I ever have free time again? This talk will lead to a discussion about burnout, individual system development, knowing how to ask for help, and the importance of creating boundaries- aimed to support the long-term goal of keeping teachers in the classroom. In this talk, I will provide my honest reflections as an educator, as well as the system I use to meet my professional obligations while still finding time for myself and my large family.

USING LIFE EXPERIENCE TO INFLUENCE YOUR TEACHING

My journey to education was unconventional. Influencing and connecting with youth with the intention of supporting them was always my professional passion. However, my professional journey did not start in the classroom. In this talk, I will discuss my road to education and how working outside of a traditional school building helped me develop my personal connected teaching style.