

The Educators'



ADVOCATE

MAY/JUNE 2021

Volume 52 | Issue 5

WE DID IT...

LET'S CELEBRATE

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Vision

We envision valued education professionals providing quality public education for all students.

Mission

South Dakota Education Association ensures the collective voice for South Dakota public education professionals.



President's Corner

Congrats, You Did It, Educators!

The 2020–2021 school year has finally come to an end. The first thing I want to say is congratulations on surviving this very challenging year. The COVID-19 pandemic created many unprecedented challenges for educators and students alike. I want to say thank you for being the dedicated professionals that you are. I know you put in many long hours and you weren't always sure what your next day would bring, but you met the challenge to benefit the students of South Dakota. South Dakota educators deserve all the accolades and more. Now the summer break is here, I hope you take the time to get some R&R, so you are ready to return to what we hope is a more normal school year.

However, as your Association President, I do have a summer activity for you. The American Rescue Plan (ARP) passed by Congress and signed by President Biden in February included an unprecedented investment in public schools of \$170 billion. This is on top of the investments of the two previous rescue plans. What does this mean for South Dakota schools? Our state will receive over \$382 million for K-12 public schools with the bulk of the money being distributed through the Title I formula. The purpose of these dollars is to help schools focus on any learning loss due to the pandemic. The funds may be used for a variety of things including but not limited to summer and after school programs, developing community schools, and providing technology to students. Your local school district will be developing plans over the summer and this is where you come in.

One of the provisions of the ARP is your school district must seek input from stakeholders, including your local association, as they develop these plans. In the coming weeks, our UniServ Directors will be reaching out to local leaders with more information about how much your school district will receive along with other tools and resources that will help create a conversation with the district. Educators know first-hand how this past year impacted students, so it is crucial that you have a say in how these dollars are invested in students. Please take this opportunity to get involved. Help your local leaders brainstorm ideas. Be apart of this important conversation.

As I stated earlier, this is an unprecedented investment in our schools and students, so we want to help our schools get this right. That will only happen if the voices of educators are at the table. Investing a little of your summertime will have big payoffs for students next year.

Again, thank you for your hard work and dedication over this past year. I know it was difficult, but I am so proud and honored to represent the best educators in the world. Have a great summer!

Loren Paul
SDEA President

605-224-9263, ext 116
loren.paul@sdea.org



A Word from Our **NEA Director**



Dana Livermont

Dana is a certified school counselor and K-12 specialist with the SD Statewide Family Engagement Center who serves as your representative on the NEA Board of Directors. She is passionate about organizing around issues and equity for students in South Dakota. Twitter [@theDanamyte](#)

NEA recently released its Annual Estimates and Rankings Report, which provides thousands of education statistics for each state, from average daily attendance to per student spending to average teacher salary. Many South Dakota educators are disheartened, but probably not surprised to see that in this year's report South Dakota ranks 50th (out of 51, including Washington, DC) in average teacher salary. We are above only Mississippi. So, how did we get here?

With the passage of the Blue Ribbon Task Force's recommended half-cent sales tax during the 2016 legislature, South Dakotans across our state celebrated a reinvestment in our public education systems and the hope that we could move our state out of 51st place in teacher pay. Research continually shows that salaries are a key factor, not only in teacher recruitment, but also in teacher retention, which has a significant impact on the learning experiences of our students and the stability of our schools and districts.

In 2017, we saw the first year with the increased funding and new accountability measures that required districts to spend 85% of the annual increases to general funds on staff salaries. That year we were able to celebrate a move out of 51st to 46th in teacher pay rankings.

You will hear arguments from community members claiming that our teacher pay is

fine, since we have such a low cost of living. Do your research and you will find that that is simply not true. Most sites that track cost of living (which can vary depending on factors used in comparisons) put South Dakota about smack dab in the middle of the pack when it comes to average cost of living. Our educators in South Dakota are very much underpaid, and that is true for nearly all categories, including ESPs, classroom teachers, school counselors, SLPs, and many more.

On a recent exec team call, our new Executive Director asked, "What are people willing to do about it?" and that has really resonated with me. Think about it. What are you willing to do about this? If you choose to do nothing, you affirm the status quo. So, what can you do? The simplest and easiest thing to do is start talking. Talk to your neighbors about the contrast between teacher pay and cost of living. Talk to your school board members about how hard it is on your students when you can't keep strong educators? Talk to your family members about how hard it is to pay for groceries and housing and stay in a profession you love.

We need to tell the story of how teacher pay is affecting South Dakota. Because we all know, if we don't set the narrative, there are plenty of groups that will. Let's start talking!

SDEA Endorses Medicaid Expansion; Joins SD Decides Healthcare Coalition

SDEA is joining a diverse coalition of healthcare providers, farmers, businesses, and other civic organizations to expand healthcare options for South Dakota's working families. The SDEA Board of Directors voted to support South Dakota Decides Healthcare to expand Medicaid coverage for over 40,000 people in the state. SDEA President Loren Paul says a successful campaign will mean healthier families for South Dakota's students.



“As educators, we know there is a link between how well students perform in the classroom and the overall health and well-being of the family. We believe expanding healthcare options for working parents will have a positive effect on their children’s ability to thrive in school,” said Paul. “Our kids need healthy families. It is really that simple. It makes a huge difference in their ability to learn.”

Medicaid expansion would return hundreds of millions of tax dollars to South Dakota from Washington for jobs and healthcare here – just like North Dakota, Nebraska, and Oklahoma have all done recently. It would help parents, farmers, and small business employees who have jobs that do not provide health insurance. A family of four earning less than \$37,000 would qualify.

SDEA chose to join South Dakota Decide Healthcare because it believes the coalition has the best chance for success in November 2022 when the initiative is expected to appear on the ballot.

“Right now, many of the organizations that can mobilize people and resources in this state are coming together through South Dakota Decides Healthcare. We’re building the type of non-partisan and broad coalition that’s needed to expand access to healthcare for hardworking families in this state,” said Paul. “We look forward to engaging our 6,000 members in the effort to bring affordable healthcare to more working families in South Dakota.”

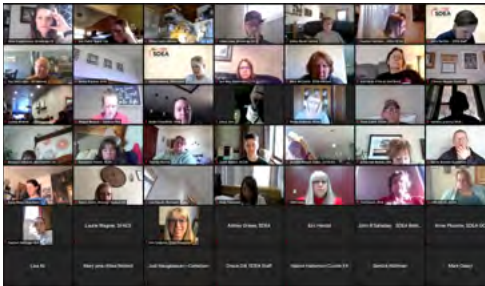
If you would like to get involved in the campaign visit southdakotansdecide.org or like the campaign’s Facebook page at facebook.com/SDDecides.



Go to
<https://bit.ly/3hZr81l>
to sign up for the next
**President's
Virtual Town Hall**
June 28, July 26 & August 26

SDEA RA Delegates Invest in Work to Help Native American Students

SDEA held its annual Representative Assembly (RA) virtually last April. Over 75 delegates from across the state conducted the Association’s business including passing a New Business Item (NBI) that invests \$30,000 in programming, to begin addressing the inequities between Native American Students and their peers.



SDEA’s Executive Leadership team presented data revealing inequities pervade nearly all aspects of education, including student achievement, disciplinary action, and graduation rates. The delegates voted to commit the Association’s collective voice to call for change and leverage our unique resources to address these inequities.

As a result of this action, SDEA and its staff is committed to the following work over the course of the next year:

- Build the capacity of our staff and Association leaders to talk about race and inequities by building conversations and training from NEA into staff meetings, the board/staff retreat, and member interactions.

- Create awareness for members on the inequities in education that exist in South Dakota through The Advocate and other communication avenues.
- Provide training for members on finding and analyzing data to understand inequities in their schools and/or district.
- Partner with other education leaders, community leaders, and Tribal leaders to build a coalition to support our efforts in addressing inequities for Native American Students.

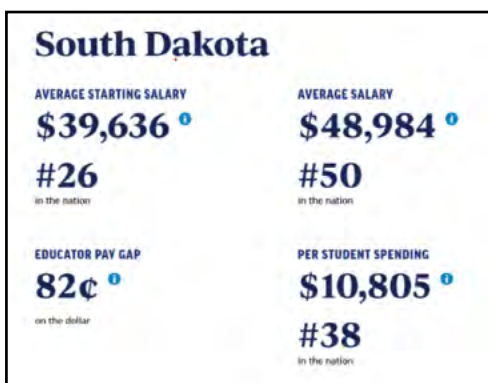


- Organize at least two communities to advocate concrete steps to achieve community schools for their children.
- Research implications for SDEA’s Strategic Goals and Budget for sustaining the work beyond this budget cycle.

Members who are interested in learning more about this works should contact SDEA President Loren Paul at Loren.Paul@sdea.org.

Sound the Alarm: Teacher Salaries Slip Back to 50

According to the National Education Association’s (NEA) latest issue of the 2021 Rankings and Estimates, South Dakota has fallen back to 50th in the nation. SDEA says now is time to act so teacher pay does not fall back to the bottom.



SDEA President Loren Paul says in 2016 state leaders made huge strides in improving teacher pay for South Dakota’s teachers, but the recent data from the NEA is a good reminder that policy makers should not take their eye off the ball in the effort to keep qualified teachers in classrooms. “This week we are celebrating the caring and committed teachers of South Dakota. They are the most dedicated professionals you will find,” said Paul. “The best way we can honor them is to renew the commitments made in 2016, which was to move pay from the bottom and make sure it doesn’t fall back there again.”

South Dakota’s rank had risen to 47th in pay for the for the 2017–2018 school year after spending decades at the bottom of the list. That changed when the 2016 legislature embraced the recommendations of the Blue-Ribbon Task Force, which

included an increase to the state sales tax and a new funding formula that targeted the new dollars to teacher pay. The legislative package also included important accountability measures to ensure the new tax dollars were used to increase pay. However, some of those provisions will go away next year. Paul says those measures are necessary to ensure the additional tax dollars continue to go to the intended purpose: raising teacher pay.

“The additional revenue from the half-penny did go a long way in boosting teacher pay, and the accountability measures were put in place to ensure taxpayers that the new money would make its way to teachers’ pockets,” said Paul. “We think these accountability measures are key to keeping those dollars targeted to salaries, and it is time to extend those provisions.”

Not all the news from the Rankings and Estimates is bad, South Dakota is outpacing its neighbors in annual salary increases. Paul attributes that to the accountability measures. “The good news is we are becoming more competitive with the states around us. The work of Blue-Ribbon Task Force got us in the game, and our state leaders deserve credit for that. However, if we want to keep up, South Dakota must continue to target the revenue from the half-penny to teacher pay,” said Paul. “Teachers are simply asking for that state to keep the promises made by the Blue-Ribbon Task Force. South Dakota must continue to hold everyone accountable for how those additional dollars are being spent. If we do that, we should continue to see our salaries increase.”

2021 Summer Online Professional Development

COHORT OF COURAGE: Dismantling Bigotry in Our Schools

Tuesdays June 8–Aug 24 | 10–noon CST
Tuesdays Sept 14–Oct 26 | 3–5pm CST

Get up-to-date research, resources, tools, and messaging to be stronger, strategic, and more effective actors in shaping our communities toward a greater vision — where all religions and cultural backgrounds are treated with fairness and dignity.

Race and Belonging

June 9, 16, 23, 30, July 7, 14 | 3–5:30pm CST

A facilitated and interactive program that provides a foundation for initiating and engaging in relational conversations about race, otherness, equity, and belonging in various settings: home, work, community.

Person-Centered Thinking

June 10, 17, 24 | 10:30–noon CST

Charting the life course is a framework that will help you plan and problem-solve with students, families, and colleagues. The framework and tools provide ways to organize ideas, a vision, and goals for yourself or with students in school at any age.

ONWARD: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators (book study)

12 monthly meetings beginning June 21 | 10 CST

Join us in a year long study of Elena Aguilar's groundbreaking work designed to extinguish burnout and revive your passion for teaching. Book and workbook included.

Educating Students Living in Poverty

July 19, 21, 23 beginning at 10am CST

Join Dr. Donna Beegle for one or all 10 of her 90-minute sessions. Explore challenges and solutions to educating those in poverty and begin to form your own action plan for your school or classroom.

Register and learn more at:

<https://bridge.sdea.org/courses>

Graduate credit pending for these courses
CEU hours also available



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Questions? Contact:

Rich Mittelstedt, Teaching and Learning Coordinator
605-886-4800 | richard.mittelstedt@sdea.org

Celebrating Rapid City's Val Simpson... the 2021 SDEA Friend of Education

SDEA presented the 2021 Friend of Education Award to Rapid City's Val Simpson who helped lead the Vote Yes Campaign for the February 2020 School Bond Election. SDEA/NEA's Friend of Education Award honors a person or organization that has made a significant contribution on a statewide basis toward achieving quality public education for all students.

"We are honored to present this year's Friend of Education Award to Val who continues to give her time and talents to improve the schools for Rapid City's students," said SDEA Loren Paul. "She led the Vote Yes Campaign with passion. Even though the campaign came up short of the 60 percent necessary to pass, Val remains committed to ensuring that Rapid City provides the best education possible to the students who live in the community. We are grateful for Val's effort, and she is most deserving of this award.

Simpson was nominated by Sarah Gross of the Rapid City Education Association (RCEA). Gross says Simpson is a "true champion of education". She is a huge supporter of the district's fine arts programs and is actively involved in supporting the students in those programs. However, it was Simpson's passion on the school bond election that led to the nomination.

"Val's employer, Black Hills Corporation, allowed her the time and supported her as she co chaired the Vote Yes Committee for the Rapid City bond election to build five new schools and remodel others.



Val was the right person for this job," said Gross. "She used her organizational skills and professionalism to lead the weekly campaign meetings and attended many school tours and district meetings pertaining to the bond election. She spoke passionately for the campaign on tv, radio, and at more in-person events than I can count. Val could fiercely argue for our schools in arenas that many of us would not have felt comfortable."

In a community letter of support, Holly Perli, a Rapid City parent and community volunteer, wrote that Simpson was the hardest working member of the committee and dedicated herself completely to the effort. "In a community and state where investments in public education have been long-awaited, Val led the way toward a bright future. What I admire most about Val's leadership is that it isn't just words, but she takes meaningful action toward the goal of a first-rate education for Rapid City students. She lent her voice to the collective voice of education professionals in the community, and we are better for her service."

If you know someone like Val who is a Friend of Education you can nominate them for this award by visiting sdea.org and clicking on the Grants and Awards tab.

Celebrating Spearfish's Carmen Frasier, SDEA's Educational Support Professional of the Year

SDEA is proud to name Carmen Frasier, a paraprofessional at Spearfish Middle School, the 2021 Educational Support Professional of the Year. Frasier has served special education students in the district for the past 20 years. Frasier joined the Spearfish Education Association four years ago and has been a great asset to the organization ever since. She and her family are active in the Spearfish community.

“Carmen is known for going above and beyond for her students and fellow educators. When the pandemic closed our schools last year, it was Carmen who took charge to make sure every student had a meal throughout rest of the school year and summer,” said SDEA President Loren Paul. “She has also stepped up as a leader in her local association encouraging others to join. Carmen gives her all to her family, community, fellow educators and, most importantly, her students.”

Rebecca Sukstorf, a middle school language arts teacher and member of the Spearfish Education Association, nominated Frasier. “Through the 28 years of knowing Carmen Frasier, I can honestly say that I have rarely known anyone who works harder, cares more for students, and is more dedicated to our school. She does all this with a smile and warm heart,” wrote Sukstorf. “One of her greatest assets is her ability to create life-long relationships with her students.

Students often return to visit her and say that she was one of the people who helped them gain confidence to achieve their goals. Her belief is that if you develop a relationship with a student and accept them for their individually, you can move mountains.”

Frasier uses her passion to feed her community regardless of their age. She lobbied to ensure every child under the age of 18 received free meals during the pandemic. “She stood in rain, snow, blazing heat, and wind to make sure that the children of our community were fed. When special circumstances arrived, Carmen personally delivered meals to families when she finished her workday,” wrote Sukstorf. “Through her work and perseverance, the veterans of our area are fed a home-cooked meal served by middle school students at least once per month.”

SDEA's ESP of the Year award recognizes the contributions of Education Support Professionals (ESPs) to their schools, communities, and their professions. The award is presented to a member of SDEA/NEA who demonstrates outstanding accomplishments and who reflects the contributions of ESP to public education. If you would like to nominate an ESP member for this honor visit the Grants and Awards section at sdea.org.

Questions or Concerns — *Contact a UniServ Director today!* 605-224-9263

Celebrating Lisa Weier... the 2021 SDEA Teacher of Excellence

The South Dakota Education Association (SDEA) has named Brookings middle school teacher, Lisa Weier, the 2021 SDEA Teacher of Excellence. Weier will also be nominated for the NEA Foundation's Awards for Teaching Excellence. Educators selected for this award have demonstrated outstanding professional practice, association advocacy, community engagement and leadership in professional development.

"It is an honor to present Lisa with the award. She is a true advocate for her students and profession," said SDEA President Loren Paul. "She is known for seeing the big picture and always putting the needs of students first. Lisa is a role model for other educators and always helping her colleagues find their voice. She is most deserving of this recognition."



Weier's dedication to her students coupled with her passion for STEM subjects leads to a love of learning by all. As a Project Lead the Way teacher in the George S. Middle School, Lisa uses her experience with Visual Thinking Strategies to help her students develop problem solving skills, think critically, communicate, collaborate, and persevere when something doesn't work out.

"Lisa is a caring and connected teacher who meets students where they are and ensures all students meet their potential," said Paul. "She takes extra time to get to know and understand each student to ensure that each of them has a positive experience in her classroom. That is true dedication."

While serving as Co-President of the Brookings Education Association, Weier helped the Brookings Education Association secure a NEA Early Leadership Institute (ELI) Grant that supported ten early career educators as they explored leadership opportunities. The work led to more meaningful supports for new educators in the district.

"As a local leader and mentor, Lisa has encouraged early career educators to get to know the association and to explore the many different leadership pathways available to members," said Paul. "Her leadership will help keep many teachers in the profession and have a positive impact on students for years to come."

The NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence recognize, reward, and promote excellence in teaching and advocacy for the association. The awards are jointly presented by the NEA Foundation and the NEA. Along with a \$1,000 grant from SDEA, Weier will receive a trip to the NEA Foundation's 2022 Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in Washington DC. Five awardees are selected for The Horace Mann Awards for Teaching Excellence and receive \$10,000. The NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence recipient, selected from the five, receives \$25,000 in cash.

2021 SDEA Election Winners

Board of Directors

Western (1) 2 year term*

Western (2) 2 year terms*

EGL 2 year term

1. Paula Hanson

EGL 1 year term*

Plains 2 year term

1. Shawn Olsen

Eastern Prairie (1) 2 year term

1. Danyelle Cleveland

Eastern Prairie (1) 1 year term

1. Kelsey Lovseth

SEE 2 year term

1. Lisa Cardillo

Minority At-Large 2 year term

1. Curt Anderson

COHE At-Large 2 year term*

ESP At-Large 2 year term

1. Heather Harmon

2021 NEA RA Unit Delegate

Western*

EGL*

Plains*

SEE*

Eastern Prairie

1. Lisa Jennings
2. Jennifer Bergan Gabor

2021 NEA RA

At-Large Delegate

Minority At-Large

1. Curt Anderson

At-Large Delegates

1. Virginia Colgan

* Denotes no candidate

There was not an SDEA election this year. All the SDEA Board of Directors and NEA RA delegate races were uncontested. The SDEA Board of Directors voted at its January 2021 meeting to automatically declare the candidates of these uncontested races winners. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact SDEA President Loren Paul, loren.paul@sdea.org, Elections Committee Chair, Stephanie Hageman, hagemans42@gmail.com, or Elections Committee Liaison Anne Plooster, anne.plooster@sdea.org.



JULY 26-28

Buffalo Ridge Resort
Gary, SD



Are you in your first five years of teaching? If so, join us!

2021 EARLY CAREER SUMMER CONFERENCE

Prepare for the next school year by getting things done, like crafting your SLO!

Reflect to share experiences, refine teaching strategies & build community.

Collaborate and connect with fellow educators across the state to create best instructional practices in the classroom.

Registration and accommodations fees covered by membership

Earn one grad credit to move up the salary schedule

Raise Your Voice...How to Spend the American Rescue Plan Funds

The American Rescue Plan provides an unprecedented investment in public education and an opportunity for educators to shape our schools for the future. South Dakota schools will receive approximately \$382 million. At least 90 percent of those dollars will be distributed to local school districts through the Title I formula. Districts must spend at least 20 percent of the funds they receive on strategies to make up learning loss through activities such as summer school or afterschool programs.

The school districts will be writing their plans over the summer and this is where educators can play an important role. The legislation requires districts to get input from key stakeholders including parents, educators, and community members. This is a real opportunity for educators to have a voice in how these dollars are invested in their children.

How can the district use these funds?

- Employing existing or hiring new staff
- COVID-19 opportunity gaps (“learning loss”)
- Summer school & afterschool programs
- Unique needs of students
- Mental health services & supports
- Activities under ESEA, IDEA, CTEA, & AEFLA
- Purchasing educational technology
- Long-term closures
- Preparedness & response
- Coordination with public health officials
- Public health protocols
- Sanitation supplies & PPE
- Staff training on sanitation & prevention
- Indoor air quality in school facilities
- School facility repairs & improvements
- Other activities as needed

How much money is my district receiving? Check with your local association leaders. Our UniServ Directors are providing the funding amounts to your local leaders. You can also find the information on our American Rescue Plan page at sdea.org.

How can I get involved? We have provided more information including sample letters, and further guidance from the U.S. Department of Education on our website at sdea.org.

Every community will look different, but if we all work together, we can reach students who are struggling and make our schools better for the future.

SDEA Awards Ramia Boersma Scholarship to Two High School Seniors

The scholarship is awarded to high school seniors who are in the top one-third of their class and planning to enroll in a college or university teacher preparation program. Recipients are also children or grandchildren of current SDEA or SDEA-Retired members. The 2021 year’s winners include:

Abigail Mayer – Washington High School | Kylie Schneider – Baltic High School

SDEA-Retired remains active and viable as an effective voice for public education and retirement security in South Dakota.



Prior to the SDEA Representative Assembly in early April, the SDEA-Retired association conducted its annual meeting, having the 2020 session cancelled due to the COVID pandemic shutdown of events.

This year's meeting addressed many issues confronting retired members, and proposed plans for the upcoming year. Details to retired members will be provided in an upcoming newsletter.

Which emphasizes the need for updated postal and email addresses from EACH and EVERY one of our Pre-Retired, Annual Retired, and Life Retired members. Please update!

In addition, we are restructuring our communications process to become more informative and responsive to members.

To communicate with us, please use the link: sdearetirededucators@outlook.com

Follow us for information and events at: <https://www.facebook.com/sdearetirededucators/>

Upcoming:

The scheduled NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, and the NEA Representative Assembly this year will again be conducted by virtual technology. We will provide connections to the proceedings and issues through the links above, as well as SDEA and NEA links. Stay tuned!

SDEA-Retired Educators President, Bob Hoffmann, will represent our local state-wide association at those events.

SDEA Members Only:

Log into MyNEA360 to join the "SDEA Members Only" group to access SDEA/NEA member only documents and information. New users will need to create a MyNEA360 profile in order to be verified as an SDEA member.



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South Dakota
Education Association



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UPCOMING EVENTS

June

28 Virtual Town Hall: Getting the most out of
your Member Benefits @ 7pm CDT/6pm
MDT

14 SDEA BOD meeting

15-16 SDEA Board/Staff Retreat

July

19 - 23 See Poverty...Be The Difference: Breaking
Poverty Barriers To Education (Virtual
Conference)

26 Virtual Town Hall: Educator "Mixer"
@ 7pm CDT/6pm MDT

26-28 2021 Early Career Summer Conference

August

26 Virtual Town Hall: Blue Ribbon Task
Force - What is it and do we still need it?
@ 7pm CDT/6pm MDT