

# The Educators' **ADVOCATE**



MAY/JUNE 2024

Volume 55 | Issue 5

## VOTE JUNE 4<sup>th</sup>

**Pro-Public  
Education  
Recommended  
Candidates**

page 6

Every vote **counts**, and **together**,  
we can make a **difference!**

13 South Dakota's SB 127: Accountability for Teacher Pay

14 SDEA Election Winners | 17 SDEA Summer Academy



# NEA Member<sup>\*</sup> Exclusive

## A trusted and valuable benefit

As an NEA member, did you know you receive \$1,000 of term life insurance at **no cost** to you? You're already enrolled in the NEA® Complimentary Life Insurance Plan, but it's a good time to make sure you've selected a beneficiary.

When you do, you can have some peace of mind that your loved ones will receive their benefit in a time of need. This unique benefit helps ensure educators like you have additional coverage beyond what may be provided through your district. It's just one of the many ways your union membership works hard for you.

Scan the code or go to  
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quick and easy path to update  
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\*Must maintain NEA membership. This coverage is offered to Active, Reserve and Staff members, as well as to Life and Retired members who are actively employed in education.  
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## Inside this Issue

- 4 **President's Corner**
- 5 **A Word from Our NEA Director**
- 6 **June 4 Primary Election: Pro-Public Education Candidates**
- 7 **SDEA Produces White Paper on Educator Safety in Schools**
- 8 **Steve Hildebrand – SDEA 2024 Friend of Education**
- 8 **SDEA Scholarship Recipients**
- 9 **Donna Ireland – 2024 SDEA ESP of the Year**
- 10 **Kim and Jason Buechler Honored with the Taking a Stand, Making A Difference Award**
- 11 **That's A Wrap — Public Schools and Students Come Out Ahead at the End of Legislative Session**
- 12 **Honored Women Educators of South Dakota**
- 13 **South Dakota's SB 127: Accountability for Teacher Pay**
- 14 **SDEA Attends NEA Leadership Summit**
- 14 **SDEA Election Winners**
- 15 **SDEA Bridge Book Studies**
- 16 **SDEA Representative Assembly**
- 17 **2024 Summer Academy**
- 18 **SDEA Retired**

### 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.

**MAY/JUNE 2024**

Volume 55 | Issue 5

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# President's Corner

## Congratulations, You Did It, Educators!

As the President of the South Dakota Education Association (SDEA), I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for the work you do. The past school year has been challenging, to say the least, but your unwavering commitment to your students, your profession, and our Association has been nothing short of amazing.

Thank you for your hard work. You have had to deal with staff shortages, a lack of substitutes, escalating student behaviors and scarce resources, but you continued to show up day in and day out. You've given your all to create an environment where our students can learn and thrive. Your dedication has not gone unnoticed.

These unprecedented times have tested us all, but you've risen to the occasion. As educators, you've adapted, innovated, and persevered. You've been there for the students, providing them with a great education even when faced with immense challenges. Your resilience is inspiring.

SDEA is committed to ensuring that everyone including parents, lawmakers and community leaders understand the value of the work you do. We must come together to push back against divisive rhetoric and demand the funding our schools and students deserve. A united front is one of the best thank you gifts we can give.

As we head into the summer break, I encourage you to take time for yourselves. Relax, recharge, and rejuvenate. You've

earned it. Investing a little of your summertime will have big payoffs for our students next year. I also want to encourage you to attend our third annual SDEA Summer Academy July 15–16 in Sioux Falls. This conference is packed with so many great sessions to support the work you do. It's also a great opportunity to gather with your fellow educators for fun and fellowship. We would love to see you in July!

As your SDEA President, I promise to continue advocating for you. We must ensure that you have the necessary resources to continue your amazing work. Let's stand together, raise our voices, and create positive change for South Dakota's educators and students.

I always end these columns by expressing my honor in representing the world's most dedicated educators. But after witnessing your efforts over the last couple of years, I am also in awe of your unwavering commitment to the students of South Dakota. Thank you.

Wishing you all a restful and rejuvenating summer!

**Loren Paul**

SDEA President

605-224-9263

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## A Word from Our NEA Director

**Kelsey Lovseth**

NEA Director

[kelsey.lovseth@gmail.com](mailto:kelsey.lovseth@gmail.com)

## URGE Congress to Fund IDEA

President Paul and I are heading to Capitol Hill to continue our work lobbying for legislation that supports public schools. Lobbying is defined as any attempt to influence the decisions of the government. I explain to my students that lobbying is the “neck of politics,” knowing that the neck is responsible for moving the head (government officials). On our list of things to discuss with our Congressional delegation

is the *IDEA Full Funding Act*. When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted in 1975, Congress committed to fund 40 percent of the average per pupil cost for special education. This bill provides permanent, mandatory funding for the grant program that assists states and outlying areas in providing special education and related services to

children with disabilities. Public schools provide special education services to more than 7 million students with disabilities—about 14 percent of all public school students. But our schools constantly struggle to fund special education because they don't receive the promised federal

### TAKE ACTION

Urge your senators and representative to support the *IDEA Full Funding Act (S. 2217/H.R. 4519)* to give all students can get the support and attention they deserve.

support. In the almost 50 years since this law was enacted, the closest the federal government has come to reaching the 40 percent commitment was 18 percent in 2004–2006, and current funding is at less than 13 percent.

You can monitor the action of the *IDEA Full Funding Act* by going to [Congress.gov](http://Congress.gov) and searching for H.R. 4519.



The *IDEA Full Funding Act (S. 2217/H.R. 4519)* will help to ensure that all students receive an education that sparks their curiosity and desire to learn.



# June 4 Primary Election: Pro-Public Education Candidates

The June 4th Primary is an important election for South Dakota's public schools. Thirty out of 70 seats in the House of Representatives will be determined in the primary election or have no election at all. Additionally, 18 out of 35 State Senate seats will be decided in the primary or are uncontested in the general election. These elections account for nearly half of the seats in the South Dakota Legislature. As an educator, your voice matters, and participating in the June 4 Primary is crucial if we want to elect pro-public education lawmakers in Pierre. Furthermore, there are numerous important school board races that directly impact students and educators.

Educators play a vital role in shaping policies that affect our schools and communities. By exercising your right to vote, you contribute to the future of education in South Dakota. Let's ensure that our lawmakers prioritize the needs of students and educators alike!

Remember, every vote counts, and together, we can make a difference!

The following are the South Dakota's Educators Political Involvement Committee (SD-EPIC) PAC recommended candidates. These candidates have demonstrated their commitment to supporting pro-public education policies.

## State House Primaries

### Pro-Public Education Candidates Include:

**District 2\*\***  
David Kull\*  
Jake Schoenbeck

**District 5**  
Byron Callies\*  
Matt Roby

**District 6**  
Herman Otten\*

**District 7**  
Roger DeGroot\*  
Mellissa Heermann\*

**District 8\*\***  
Tim Reisch\*

**District 9**  
Daryl Christensen  
Kristi Golden

**District 11**  
Brian Mulder\*

**District 12**  
Amber Arlint\*  
Greg Jamison\*

**District 13\*\***  
Brad Jankord  
Tony Venhuizen\*

**District 14**  
Taylor Rehfeldt\*  
Tyler Tordsen\*

**District 16**  
Richard Vasgaard\*

**District 18**  
Mike Stevens\*  
John Marquardt

**District 19\*\***  
Drew Peterson\*  
Jessica Bahmuller\*

**District 22\*\***  
Kevin Van Diepen  
Terry Nebelsick

**District 23\*\***  
Scott Moore\*  
JD Wangness\*

## IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES:

Primary Election  
June 4, 2024

Voter Registration Deadline  
May 20, 2024

Absentee Balloting Available  
Now through June 4

Check Your Voter Registration:



**District 29\*\***  
Gary Cammack\*

**District 32**  
Steve Duffy\*

**District 34\*\***  
Becky Drury\*  
Mike Derby\*

## State Senate Primaries

**District 3\*\***  
Katie Washnok

**District 4\*\***  
Stephanie Sauder\*

**District 8\*\***  
Casey Crabtree\*

**District 9\*\***  
Mark Willadsen\*

**District 16\*\***  
Eric Hohman

**District 17\*\***  
Sydney Davis\*

**District 18**  
Jean Hunhoff\*

**District 21**  
Erin Tobin\*

**District 23\*\***  
Steven Roseland

**District 25**  
Jordan Youngberg\*

**District 27**  
Red Dawn Foster\*

**District 31**  
Randy Deibert\*

**District 33\*\***  
David Johnson\*

**District 34**  
Jason Green

**District 35\*\***  
Michael Walsh\*

\* Friendly  
Legislator/  
Incumbent

\*\* No General  
Election Contest

# SDEA Produces White Paper on Educator Safety in Schools

The 2023 SDEA Representative Assembly passed NBI 6, which directed SDEA to research and publish a "white paper" on the existence of state and federal law, regulation, and administrative statute regulating, guaranteeing, or protecting a safe work environment for SD teachers and education professionals. The document was presented at the annual SDEA RA in April.

The benchmark for safe work environment law is the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, 29 USC § 651 et seq (OSH Act), a federal workplace safety statute for private-sector employees. Because of this, the OSH Act does not apply to South Dakota's public schools and their employees who must look to South Dakota's own laws and regulations for protections. Given that South Dakota is

highly employer-centric, such protections are scarce to nonexistent. Without specific statutory and regulatory protections at the ready, teachers and other education professionals in South Dakota public schools may need to avail themselves of South Dakota's public bargaining laws which may provide avenues to immortalize protections in negotiated agreements aka collective bargaining agreements.

Scan the QR Code  
to read the full  
white paper.



## SDEA Members Only:

Sign up and log into the new SDEA.org to access Members Only documents and information like the SDEA Board of Director minutes and Educators Employment Liability (EEL) Program documents.

# Steve Hildebrand

## SDEA 2024 Friend of Education



SDEA announced Steve Hildebrand as the recipient of the 2024 Friend of Education Award. This prestigious honor recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to supporting public education and advocating for students and educators.

“Steve Hildebrand’s unwavering dedication to education has transformed lives,” says Tim Eckert, President of the Sioux Falls Education Association. “His impact reaches beyond the classroom, creating a brighter future for our community.”

Steve created the Promising Futures Fund which focuses on providing additional support to schools with the highest poverty

rates. By addressing resource gaps, he aims to that all students have access to the tools and programs needed for success.

Steve’s commitment to equality and inclusivity within the educational realm sets him apart. He believes that every student, regardless of their background, deserves equal opportunities to succeed.

Steve doesn’t just lift up the educational system; he actively works to break down barriers to student success. His efforts

include middle school college visits, providing books to children, sponsoring fine arts experiences, and purchasing classroom materials.

Steve recognizes that teachers play a crucial role in shaping students’ futures. His support empowers educators, allowing them to prepare students for an ever-changing world.

The SDEA/NEA Board of Directors selected Steve Hildebrand based on his leadership, activities, and unwavering support for public education. His passion and commitment serve as an inspiration to us all. To learn more about the Promising Futures Fund visit [promisingfuturesfund.org](https://promisingfuturesfund.org).

## SDEA Scholarship Recipients

The South Dakota Education Association/NEA awards scholarships to outstanding students who are planning on entering the teaching profession.

### Gordon Horgen Scholarship

Aspen Hickey, *Lyman High School*

### Ramia Boersma Scholarship

Lucy Walker, *Watertown High School*

Aiden Barfuss, *Winner High School*

# Donna Ireland

## 2024 SDEA ESP of the Year

SDEA named Donna Ireland as the recipient of the Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year award. Donna’s unwavering commitment and exceptional contributions have left an indelible mark on Roosevelt Elementary School and the entire Watertown community.

Jenny Berg nominated Donna for this award because Donna embraces challenges with a smile, fearlessly taking on new responsibilities both at Roosevelt Elementary and within the Watertown Education Association. Her positive attitude and willingness to lend a helping hand make her an invaluable asset. As an ESP, Donna wears multiple hats: nurse, caregiver, substitute teacher, small group instructor, and problem solver.

She ensures that students and staff have everything they need to succeed.

“Donna’s dedication and passion exemplify the spirit of our education community,” says Berg. “Her impact extends far beyond the classroom walls.”

Donna’s mastery of de-escalation allows staff and students to focus on crucial curriculum time. She works with students in crisis, creating a safe environment for everyone. She consistently acts by the book, maintaining a professional demeanor while adding joy to the school day.

Donna serves on the State Committee, advocating for the needs of ESPs throughout the district. Her fearless approach ensures that ESPs have a voice at the table. She actively seeks learning and leadership opportunities, attending sessions offered by the Watertown Education Association and SDEA. Her innovative ideas continue to enhance education.



Each year SDEA awards a State ESP of the Year Award. The SDEA Education Support Professional 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 who demonstrates outstanding accomplishments and reflects the contributions of ESP to public education.

# Kim and Jason Buechler Honored with the Taking a Stand, Making A Difference Award

SDEA has named Kim and Jason Buechler as the recipients of this year's Taking a Stand, Making A Difference Award. This award recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional courage, advocacy, and commitment to human and civil rights within the education community.

Sue Zueger, the nominator, emphasizes the impact of the Buechlers' advocacy:

"Their courage and openness have inspired countless educators to advocate for the rights of transgender individuals. By sharing their story, Kim and Jason have empowered others to stand up, educate, and create positive change."

The Buechlers, parents of a transgender child, have shared their family's journey, contributing to a more informed and compassionate dialogue around transgender issues. Their impactful presentations at SDEA's Leadership Educator Conferences over the past two years have resonated with educators, administrators, and community members alike.

"LGBTQA+ What???" Sessions: A Personal Journey

In their sessions titled "LGBTQA+ What???", Kim and Jason candidly discuss their experiences, hopes, fears, and questions related to raising a transgender child. Their willingness to address even the most private



concerns has fostered understanding and empathy among attendees. By weaving humor and a parent's perspective into their presentations, they ensure that no question remains off-limits.

"Dissipating Hate and Misinformation"

South Dakota has faced divisive legislative debates surrounding transgender rights. The Buechlers' presentations have been instrumental in countering harmful rhetoric. Educators who attended their sessions returned to their schools armed with greater compassion and empathy for transgender students and their families. The ripple effect of their message promises to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for this vulnerable community.

The Taking A Stand, Making A Difference Award celebrates those who embody the spirit of advocacy, resilience, and progress. It recognizes individuals who go beyond their professional roles to champion equality, justice, and human rights.

# That's A Wrap — Public Schools and Students Come Out Ahead at the End of Legislative Session

The 2024 Legislature officially wrapped up its work at the end of March. While SB 127, the new law for accountability for teacher compensation, received most of the headlines, lawmakers debated many other issues impacting public education. Here are some of the other highlights from this year's session:

## Thumbs Up – Lawmakers:

- Passed SB 51 increasing state aid to education by four percent. Even though state appropriators adopted a budget more aligned with "normal times", advocates for public education secured funding above the statutory increase of three percent. The General Appropriations bill also included \$6 million for teachers to access training on the Science of Reading.
- Passed HB 1187, creating a one-year career and technical education instructor educator permit allowing school districts that want to offer Career and Technical Education classes but have exhausted all efforts to fill a position to grant a permit for one year to an individual who meets specific qualifications.
- Passed HB 1197, requiring schools to adopt and publish book selection procedures.
- Passed HB 1201, providing an additional \$800,000 to expand the teacher apprenticeship pathway program, opening the door to an additional 90 paraprofessionals to earn their teacher certificates.
- Passed SB 1, expanding the eligibility for the reduced tuition benefit at the state's regental institutions to school counselors.
- Passed SB 2, putting the decisions for credits students receive for completing dual credit courses back in the hands of local school districts.

- Defeated HB 1001 and HB 1175 bills permanently lowered state sales tax to 4.2 percent, reducing the money available for public schools by over \$100 millions.
- Defeated HB 1021, merging the Professional Standards and Practices commissions for teachers and administrators.
- Defeated HB 1250, creating a \$109 million voucher program.
- Defeated 1189, banning payroll deduction for the collection of dues.

## Thumbs Down – Lawmakers:

- Passed SB 72, increasing the insurance premium tax credit program for the Partners in Education Scholarship program (a backdoor voucher program) to \$5 million, up from \$3.5 million.
- Passed SB 203, allowing individuals with enhanced carry permits to possess firearms on school grounds with the permission of a building principal.
- Failed to Pass HB 1042 and 1238, bills expanding the free and reduced lunch program to more South Dakota students.
- Failed to Pass HB 1072, defining the composition of the South Dakota Board of Education Standards to include four certified educators.
- Failed to Pass HB 1184 requiring the state Department of Social Services to apply for the Federal Summer EBT program for low-income students.



# Honored Women Educators of South Dakota

(Annie D. Tallent Club 1954–1993)

The purpose of HWE of South Dakota is to recognize outstanding South Dakota women educators and to promise better relationships among women engaged in educational work.

## Seeking nominations for the following awards:

### Honored Women Educators of South Dakota Nominee

Nominees should have worked in the field of education in South Dakota for a minimum of ten years. Be active members of SDEA/NEA (if retired, they should have been active members during their teaching careers), be fully qualified educationally for their field of work, and have made major contributions in the area of education. Nominees also should have been active in their communities and exhibit character traits worthy of the honor of membership.

Deadline for Nomination is **May 31**.

Please **DO NOT** divulge the nominations to the nominee.



Nomination forms and info for both awards:

<https://bit.ly/4agztGx>

### Book Award

The \$500 Book Award is for a female student majoring in the field of education who is in the second semester of her junior year. The award is based on financial need.

#### Requirements:

- Minimum of 2.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale
- Attach a copy of most recent transcript
- Attach a list of two (2) contact persons if follow-up reference should be needed.
- Write an essay of not less than 250 words on “How I Feel I will Make a Difference in the Field of Education” (Attach to this application)

Deadline date for application, including transcript, personal contacts, and essay is **May 31**.

## Health and Safety Survey Still Open



The SDEA Health and Safety Committee still wants to hear from you! The committee is continuing to collect information on the conditions in our schools. Please take a few minutes to share your experience with them by scanning the QR code to take the survey. You can also help the committee in its work by encouraging your fellow educator to complete the survey as well. Your experience will help inform their findings and recommendations.

Working together, we can provide healthy and safe working environments for educators and positive learning environments for students.



UNION U

## South Dakota's SB 127: Accountability for Teacher Pay

### What Does It Mean?

The South Dakota Legislature passing SB 127 brings significant changes to teacher compensation by establishing a minimum salary for teachers and holding school districts accountable for meeting certain compensation requirements. The following is what you need to know about the new accountability for teacher compensation:

#### Minimum Salary

SB 127 sets a statewide minimum teacher salary of \$45,000 for the first year. The minimum salary will accelerate in alignment with the increase in state aid to education. Deadline for Compliance: School districts currently paying below the minimum will have until the 2026–2027 school year (FY 2027) to meet this requirement.

#### Average Teacher Compensation

Each school district is required to raise its average teacher compensation by at least 97% of the increase in state aid to education. Failure to meet these requirements will trigger penalties, including:

- Reduction in State Aid: Districts failing to comply may face a reduction in state aid at a rate of \$500 per full-time equivalent (FTE) instructional staff.
- Loss of Accreditation: In extreme cases, districts could lose their accreditation.
- The School Finance Accountability Board (SFAB) oversees compliance and has the authority to grant waivers.

#### Considerations for the Local Bargaining Team

Accountability is based on total compensation including gross salary and benefits such as group health insurance, retirement contributions, and worker's compensation.

The increase in average compensation is not the same as an increase on the salary schedule or the individual raise a teacher will receive. Advocacy for robust compensation packages is essential for the well-being of educators and the success of our schools.

#### Numbers for the Bargaining Team to Watch

- Current Average Compensation – This refers to expected total expenditures for teacher compensation (including both salary and benefits) in the current school year.
- Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff – The number of certified instructional staff reported to the Department of Education for the current school year.

#### The Importance of Getting Ahead

Administrators and school boards should recognize that merely meeting the minimum requirements may put the district at a disadvantage in the long run. Here's why:

**Flexibility:** By exceeding the minimum, districts gain flexibility. They can better adapt to changing levels of state aid to education.

**Long-Term Planning:** Staying ahead of the increase in state aid allows districts to plan for the future.

— continued to page 15

# SDEA Attends NEA Leadership Summit

**Danile Erdman & Sara Steckel**  
Mitchell EA

**Natalie Frickel & Patty Schwasinger**  
Vermillion EA

**Stephanie Hageman**  
SDEA Vice President

**Lisa Weier**  
SDEA Professional Development Coordinator

**Kelsey Lovseth**  
NEA Director



## 2024 SDEA Election Winners

The SDEA/NEA Elections Committee met on April 26, 2024, to count and certify the results of the election.

### Board of Directors

#### Western (2) 1 year terms

1. Robert Dahlenburg
2. Deborah Rohlf

#### Western (1) 2 year term

1. Jennifer Macziewski

#### EGL 2 year term

1. Olivia Forman

#### Plains 2 year term

1. Kim Doherty

#### Eastern Prairie (2) 2 year terms

1. Tim Eckart
2. Open position

#### SEE 2 year term

1. Kerry Evans

#### SEE 1 year term

1. Amanda Sonne

#### ESP At-Large 1 year term

1. Lisa Jennings

#### COHE At-Large 1 year term

1. Alan Aldrich

#### NEA RA UNIT DELEGATE WINNERS

##### Western

1. Robert Dahlenburg
2. Open Position

##### EGL

1. Olivia Forman

#### Plains

1. Jeremy Schultz

#### SEE

1. Open Position

#### Eastern Prairie

1. Tim Eckert
2. Lisa Jennings

#### NEA RA AT-LARGE DELEGATE WINNERS

##### Minority At-Large

1. Qiang Ai

#### AT-LARGE DELEGATES

1. Bobbie Knispel
2. Kim Soldatke
3. Virginia Colgan
4. Virgil Whetsel

**SDEA BRIDGE**  
Bringing Resources, Innovation, Development & Guidance to Educators

**Register on Bridge**  
<https://bit.ly/3Pnntdh>

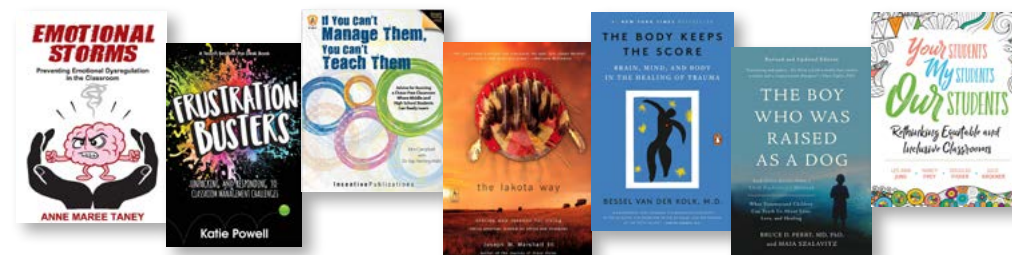
**SDEA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Lisa Weier**  
Teaching and Learning Coordinator  
[Lisa.Weier@sdea.org](mailto:Lisa.Weier@sdea.org)

## Book Studies (free for members and \$50 for non-members)

Course registration is open. Content will be released May 15. Course registrations close June 30. Courses end July 31. Courses completed after July 31 will be eligible for CECH only. Extensions for graduate credit will not be allowed. As of April 15, 2024, SDEA no longer reimburses members for the cost of the book.

To register, please visit the SDEA Bridge website >> <https://bit.ly/3Pnntdh>.



## Three Online Graduate Courses. Up to nine credits for \$225 TOTAL!



SDEA has partnered with Augustana University and VESi to offer members a yearly subscription to online graduate courses for \$225 per year. You can enroll in one course per term or two courses during the summer (if you skip fall or spring), for a total of 3 courses per year.

— continued from page 13

### Teacher Retention and Recruitment:

Competitive compensation attracts and retains high-quality educators, benefiting students and the community.

SB 127 represents a step toward greater accountability and fairness in teacher pay. Districts should view it as an opportunity

to invest in their most valuable asset—their teachers.

If you have questions about how the new accountability for teacher compensation should be implemented in your local school district contact your Uniserv Director.



# 2024 SDEA Representative Assembly at Drifters Event Center



## Changes to EPIC PAC Donations

For over 25 years, SDEA members have donated \$10 to the South Dakota Educators Political Involvement Committee (SD-EPIC) to support pro-public education candidates at the state and local levels. However, the rising cost of campaigns and a need to invest in more school board candidates has limited the SD-EPIC board's ability to invest meaningfully in the number of candidates who champion our educators and students. With that in mind, the SDEA Board of Directors proposed a by-law change to increase members' SD-EPIC contribution to \$15. The delegates unanimously accepted the increase at the Representative Assembly in April. The SD-EPIC Board will target the additional resources to combat the efforts of the far right, whose goals are to undermine public education by pushing voucher schemes and book bans and invest in those candidates who support public school educators and the students whom they serve.



## Local Treasurer's Training

- Responsibilities as an Association Officer
- Important Tax Topics
- Reporting Association Income and Expenses
- Membership Dues/Reconciliation
- ACH payment option

Contact Holly Frederick at [holly.frederick@sdea.org](mailto:holly.frederick@sdea.org) and Lathie Under Baggage at [lathie.underbaggage@sdea.org](mailto:lathie.underbaggage@sdea.org) to set up your training date!



SDEA members are invited to make plans to attend the Summer Academy July 14 –16, 2024 on the Augustana University campus in Sioux Falls. We are proud to feature a keynote from comedian and educator Mark Schumacher.

Breakout sessions have selections for a variety of professional development, leadership development, advocacy, and organizing.

Attendees who participate in the pre-conference sessions on Sunday, July 14th from 3 – 6 pm and all sessions during the conference, will earn enough hours for one graduate credit.

## 2024 SUMMER ACADEMY KEYNOTE

### Mark Schumacher



With over 15 years of performance experience, Mark is more than just a keynote speaker. His unique background in stand up comedy, combined with his credibility as a teacher, provides a refreshing break from traditional speakers. In 2015, Mark was selected as one of the top 100 comedians in the country and appeared on NBC's Last Comic Standing. A teacher at heart, Mark spent 10 years in the classroom in three different countries. He understands both the joys

and challenges educators face every day. Today, he is invited to speak to teachers and administrators about the importance of relationships in our schools and communities. Since leaving the classroom full-time Mark has delivered his keynote message to tens of thousands of educators across the country.



**Registration & More Info**

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**Rich Mittelstedt**  
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**Sandy Arseneault**  
Plains UniServ Director  
[Sandy.Arseneault@sdea.org](mailto:Sandy.Arseneault@sdea.org)

**Contact a UniServ Director today! 605-224-9263**



This month, I want to highlight NEA's work to eliminate unfair penalties for educators and other public employees nationwide. Most South Dakota teachers are not affected by GPO/WEP; however, over 9000 South Dakota residents who dedicated their careers to public service, including some educators, have had their Social Security benefits reduced—or lost them entirely—due to the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO).

1. The WEP reduces the Social Security benefits of people who work in jobs covered by Social Security and jobs NOT covered by Social Security throughout their careers—for example, educators compelled to take part-time or summer jobs to make ends meet.
2. The GPO reduces—or eliminates—the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits of people who also get a pension based on federal, state, or local government employment NOT covered by Social Security.

Additionally, GPO/WEP discourages people from becoming educators, especially those in mid-career who stand to lose Social Security benefits

they have already earned.

Would you join me in contacting our congressional delegation? NEA's online action center, [nea.org/GPOWEP](http://nea.org/GPOWEP), allows you to learn more and write to your members of Congress.

Support your fellow educators even if GPO/WEP doesn't affect you. To repeal these unfair laws, we need support from members of Congress from every state!

This summer, SDEA-retired is invited to the SDEA Summer Academy at Augustana University in Sioux Falls, July 14–16. If you are mentoring or subbing, I highly recommend you attend this. Your mileage and double room occupancy are paid. More information is available in this issue of the Advocate. If you are interested, contact Korey Erickson at [korey.erickson@sdea.org](mailto:korey.erickson@sdea.org).

West River usually has a social in the Rapid City area before the Sturgis Rally; please be sure to look for more information as July approaches. Retired members in the Sioux Falls area will also gather for an event this summer. If retirees in other places want to organize an event, please get in touch with us.

Mary Jane Chiles  
SDEA Retired President

#### **ADDITIONAL CONTACTS**

SDEA Retired Staff Liaison:  
LouAnn Jensen | 605-220-1688  
[LouAnn.Jensen@sdea.org](mailto:LouAnn.Jensen@sdea.org)

**Mental Health Doesn't Take the Summer Off**

You've put students first for the school year. Now it's time to focus on yourself. May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Take this summer to rest, recharge and prioritize your wellbeing. After giving your all to your work, it's time to give back to yourself.

**SDSP** SOUTH DAKOTA SUICIDE PREVENTION **SD BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

Note to Self: Help and hope are always here. Find resources at [SDBehavioralHealth.gov](http://SDBehavioralHealth.gov)



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## May

- 1 SDEA/NEA Educational Innovation Grant deadline
- 1 NCSEA board mtg
- 3-4 NEA BOD meeting
- 5-10 Teacher Appreciation Week
- 27 Memorial Day (SDEA offices closed)

## June

- 4 Primary Election
- 10-12 Board/Staff Retreat
- 19 Juneteenth (SDEA offices closed)
- 29-30 NEA Aspiring Ed Conference

## July

- 3-7 NEA Representative Assembly
- 14-16 SDEA Summer Academy



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