

THE EDUCATORS'

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NOV/DEC 2025

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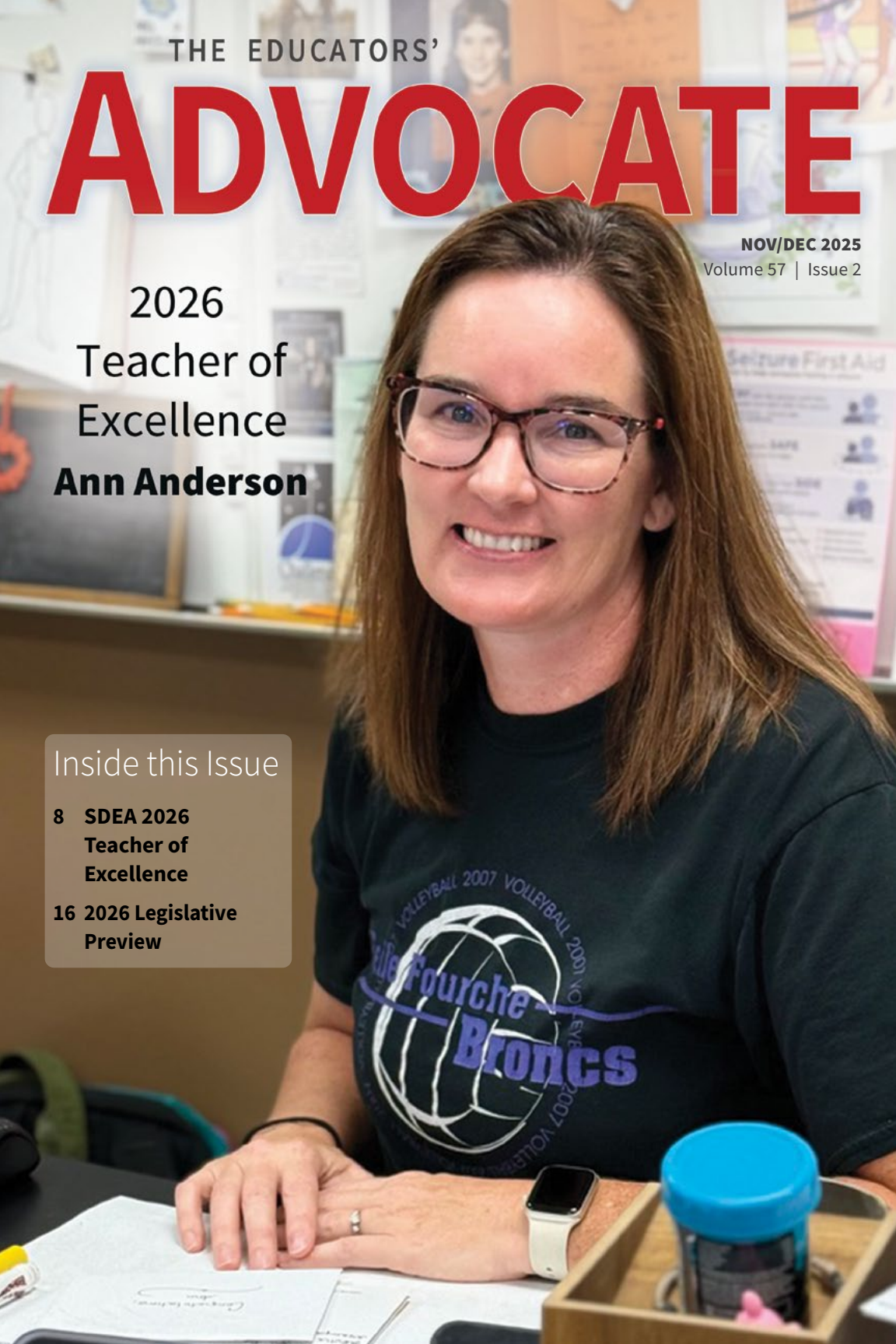
Teacher of
Excellence

Ann Anderson

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Teacher of
Excellence**

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NEA Member^{*} 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
neamb.com/mycomp for a
quick and easy path to update
your beneficiary information.**



***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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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.

NOV/DEC 2025

Volume 57 | Issue 2

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President's Corner

Stephanie Hageman

SDEA President

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Alone We Can Do So Little; Together We Can Do So Much

A few weeks ago, I had the privilege of spending time in Washington, D.C. for training, advocacy, networking, and so much more. One presenter shared a powerful reminder of Helen Keller's words: *"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."* As I reflect on the week, I am deeply grateful for the collaborative relationships I have built with colleagues and members who share my passion for this important work.

The South Dakota Department of Education is currently seeking feedback on the proposed Health Education and Mathematics Standards. As professionals and experts in your fields, this is an important opportunity to use your voice to help shape what students across our state will learn in the years ahead.

Both sets of proposed standards were developed with the goal of clarifying and simplifying terminology while ensuring students can make meaningful, real-world connections through their learning. I encourage you to review the proposed standards carefully and consider how well they align with the needs of the students you serve every day.

As I continue engaging with members across the state, I am constantly inspired

by the incredible work you do—whether being recognized for an award, finding new ways for your local association to positively impact your community, or encouraging a student to persevere through challenges. You are making a lasting difference in South Dakota's public education system. I hope you take time to reflect on your impact and celebrate both your own achievements and those of your colleagues.

At SDEA, we are preparing for a series of upcoming elections that will help shape the future of public education in South Dakota for years to come. Whether at the local, state, or national level, I encourage you to get involved to ensure that every South Dakota student continues to have access to the high-quality public education they deserve.

This spring, SDEA will hold elections for several key leadership positions, including President, Vice President, NEA Director, and a Board of Directors seat in each of our five units. It is essential that we fill these roles with strong, passionate leaders committed to advancing SDEA's mission.

Additionally, we are seeking candidates to represent SDEA at the NEA Representative Assembly in Denver, Colorado, in July 2026. If you have never attended a NEA

Representative Assembly, I encourage you to consider running as a delegate. This event provides an incredible opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions about the future of public education alongside your South Dakota colleagues and more than six thousand educators from across the nation.

When I became your SDEA President, I promised to stand beside you, work with you, and fight for you and your students.

Today, I ask that you join me in keeping that promise. By taking an active role in our association, we can continue to strengthen our collective voice and make a lasting difference—together.

As Helen Keller so wisely said, *“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”*

Suparna Nagman

Show Your Love for Public Schools!

**American Education Week
(November 17–21) — let’s celebrate together!**

Wear your **I ❤️ Public Schools** t-shirt and show your pride in the incredible work you do for students and your community. Let’s make it loud, proud, and visible across South Dakota!



Share the Love:



Post your photos on social media and SDEA’s Facebook page. Use hash tags **#ILovePublicSchools**, **#AEW2026**, **#PublicSchoolPride** **#SDEAUnited**, **#LoudAndProud**

Locals:



Send your pictures to Rebecca Feller at **Rebecca.Feller@sdea.org**.

Together, we can shine a spotlight on the amazing educators and staff who make public schools the heart of our communities.

Share your love for Public Schools—LOUD and PROUD!



A Word from Our NEA Director

Kelsey Lovseth

NEA Director

kelsey.lovseth@gmail.com

September Superweek in the Books

At the beginning of October, President Hageman and I traveled to our nation's capital for the National Education Association's Superweek. This was my first (and hopefully last) experience in Washington, D.C., during a government shutdown. Even amidst the shutdown, Senator Rounds met with me, and Senator Thune's staff met with us to discuss the following key topics:

Fiscal Year 2026 Education Funding

Article I of the Constitution entrusts Congress with the "power of the purse." Yet, the Executive Branch has unilaterally cut, clawed back, and repurposed FY2025 congressional appropriations. We discussed the importance of including "guardrails" in the FY2026 appropriation bills to ensure that education funding is spent in accordance with the law.

Note: Senator Rounds is a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Funding

When Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it promised that the federal government would cover 40 percent of the excess costs of special education. A half-century later, the federal share is less than 12 percent. According to the Congressional Research Service, the IDEA funding shortfall for the 2023–24 school year was nearly **\$39 billion**.

This failure to fully fund IDEA has shifted the financial burden to states and local school districts—forcing them to choose between raising taxes, cutting essential services, or reducing opportunities and programs for all students by redirecting general education funds. Senator Rounds and I discussed both the funding gap and the role of the U.S. Department of Education as an executive cabinet agency.

Educational Support Professional Priority Bills

Education support professionals (ESPs) transport students, maintain safe and clean school environments, prepare and serve nutritious meals, and perform other essential duties that support student learning. Yet many of these professionals struggle to make ends meet. One-third of ESPs earn \$25,000 or less per year; 10 percent rely on food assistance, and another 10 percent are covered by Medicaid.

In South Dakota, we know these professionals are **indispensable** in our schools.



**If you would like to
contact our members of
Congress please go to:
<http://bit.ly/48vQH4Y>**



Know Your Rights with Brooke

Bargaining Unit Composition

Hello everyone! I want to talk about bargaining units, how they can change, and how SDEA can help you with this. If you are reading this, you are probably part of a bargaining unit that has chosen an SDEA local affiliate as your bargaining representative. If not, and you want to be, we can help with that too. As a public-school employee, you have the right to bargain your agreements together. This is an important way for you to improve your working conditions.

Many agreements start with a recognition clause, which is sometimes called a statement of recognition. This part of your contract formally names the union, including SDEA and your local affiliate, as your only bargaining representative. It also explains which jobs and locations are included in the bargaining unit. The makeup of the bargaining unit cannot be changed by just one side. Any changes to positions must go through a legal process. If this does not happen, it could lead to an unfair labor practice claim.

What do you do if you want to make changes to your bargaining unit? If there is a group

that is not listed in your recognition clause within your negotiated agreement that you would like to include, the first step is to ask your School Board for voluntary recognition. If they are willing to do so, the appropriate documentation must be completed for that to go into effect. If the School Board is NOT willing to voluntarily recognize your unit's makeup, you must then proceed to file a Unit Determination with the Department of Labor. This hearing will be held in Pierre. To begin this process, a petition must be filed with the South Dakota Department of Labor. This is something that would be handled by the SDEA attorney- you are not alone in this!

Again, please know that you are not alone. SDEA is here to provide you with the help and resources you need to navigate through these difficult issues. The first step is knowing your rights. If you run into an issue like this and would like assistance, please reach out to your UniServ Director.

Brooke Quinlivan

SDEA General Counsel

605-224-9263

brooke.quinlivan@sdea.org



Contact a UniServ Director today!

Shannon Maxon | Western UniServ Director | Shannon.Maxon@sdea.org

LouAnn Jensen | EGL UniServ Director | LouAnn.Jensen@sdea.org

Rich Mittelstedt | SEE UniServ Director | Richard.Mittelstedt@sdea.org

Sandy Arseneault | Plains UniServ Director | Sandy.Arseneault@sdea.org

Steve Binkley | Eastern Prairie UniServ Director | Steve.Binkley@sdea.org

605-224-9263

Introducing Ann Anderson: SDEA 2026 Teacher of Excellence



Each year, the South Dakota Education Association honors an educator who exemplifies excellence in teaching, and in 2026, that distinction goes to Anne Anderson of Belle Fourche. Known for her innovative classroom practices, deep commitment to student success, and leadership within her school community, Anne has earned the respect of colleagues and students alike. In this Q&A, Anne tells us more about her journey, her approach to education, and the insights she's gained from her years in the classroom.

Tell us more about your hometown, family, education, or anything you'd like your fellow SDEA members to know.

"I grew up in Mandan, North Dakota, where my parents were educators in the public school system. My mom taught for 40 years, and my dad for 39. My sister teaches at Bismarck High, my sister-in-law as well, and my niece is at Lincoln Elementary in Bismarck. My grandma and uncle are also in education. I attended Jamestown University and earned my Master's Degree at Black Hills State University. I teach science, reading interventions, and social studies at Belle Fourche Middle School in Belle Fourche, South Dakota.



I have furthered my professional development through National Board Certification in 2011 and the 2012 Presidential Award for Excellence in



Mathematics and Science Teaching, of which I now serve as the State Science Coordinator. Other leadership roles include co-president, treasurer, and member organizer for the Belle Fourche Education Association, as well as treasurer for the Bronc Booster Club, supporting Belle Fourche students and athletes.

My approach to education is centered around my students, emphasizing inquiry, hands-on learning, and real-world applications to foster connections between students' academic work and their everyday lives. Students see themselves as scientists and engage in authentic scientific practices. I've worked to build strong relationships,



What do you see as some of the greatest challenges facing public school educators and students in the coming years?

“One of the greatest challenges facing public education is the lack of science instruction at the elementary level. Since the late 1980s, time spent on science has steadily declined, despite young students’ natural curiosity and creativity. Science provides an ideal context to teach reading, writing, math, social studies, and many other content areas. Through science, students explore the world while building interdisciplinary skills. Challenges like retaining teachers, competing with technology, and ensuring equitable access remain. But by promoting engaging, hands-on science instruction early on, we can better prepare all students for the future and maybe even inspire the next generation of scientists.”

How has your involvement with SDEA helped shape your career and your role as a leader among educators?

“I’ve been a member of NEA since college, encouraged by my parents, who understood the importance of being part of a professional organization that supports educators. For many years, I was an active member but not heavily involved beyond that. However, over time, I began to see the broader impact and influence that SDEA had, not just on policy, but on everyday classroom practice and professional development.

In recent years, I’ve taken on a more active role, and that involvement has truly transformed how I see myself within the profession. Through SDEA, I’ve connected with many innovative, passionate, and supportive leaders who have inspired me and challenged me to step outside of my comfort zone. These relationships introduced me to opportunities I wouldn’t have pursued otherwise, including leadership roles.

My current position as co-president of my local union began out of necessity; we needed someone to step up, but it quickly became something much more meaningful.

ensuring that every student feels welcomed, valued, and supported in my classroom.”

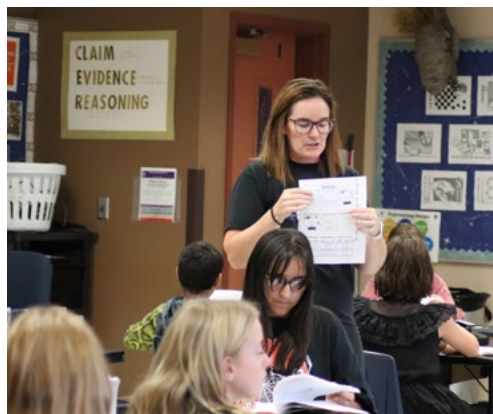
You’ve taught 5th-grade science for many years—what makes this age group and subject so special to you?

“This is my 27th year teaching 5th graders. I began with 5th and 6th-grade science and social studies in Langdon, North Dakota. Since then, I’ve had the opportunity to teach 5th grade in Sugar Land, Texas; Hazelton, North Dakota; and Spearfish, South Dakota. This is my 20th year in Belle Fourche.

What makes 5th grade so special to me is the unique stage of development students are in at this age. They’re old enough to begin thinking more critically and independently, yet they still have genuine excitement and wonder about the world. That curiosity brings so much life into the classroom. In science especially, their eagerness to explore, experiment, and ask “why” makes every day exciting. They’re hands-on learners who thrive when given the chance to discover things for themselves.

There’s also a strong sense of community that starts to develop in 5th-grade classrooms. Students are becoming more aware of the world around them, and they enjoy working together, solving problems, and sharing what they’ve learned. Their enthusiasm is contagious, making teaching not only rewarding but also a lot of fun. Teaching this age group means I get to watch lightbulb moments happen every day, and that never gets old.”

It gave me the chance to advocate for my colleagues, build stronger relationships within the district, and contribute to important conversations about the direction of education in our community. It's been a humbling and empowering experience, and one that has significantly shaped my growth as both an educator and a leader."



What advice would you give to teachers who are just entering the profession today?

"Have fun! Teaching is a joyful, challenging, and incredibly meaningful career. My advice for new teachers is to lead with empathy, curiosity, and compassion. I try to teach the way I hope my own children will be taught with respect and dignity. Early in my career, I kept a sticky note on my computer that read: "He's not giving me a hard time, he's having a hard time." That reminder shaped my mindset and helped me focus on the student, not me.

Our fifth-grade team embraces the motto: "Every Child, Every Minute, Every Day." I hope everyone sees themselves as a favorite and that they belong. Consistency, presence, and encouragement can make all the difference in a child's life.

My students deserve a safe, supportive space where they are valued, no matter what they may be experiencing outside of school. My mood or attitude shouldn't affect their learning, and my compassion shouldn't

require validation or full context.

Start strong by building relationships with students and families. I try to call every student's family within the first few weeks. These early, positive conversations build trust and lay the foundation for ongoing collaboration. Parents are their children's first teachers, and it's my job to support and strengthen that foundation.

When it comes to classroom management, focus on clarity, consistency, and care. Set high expectations and use redirection thoughtfully. Help students view mistakes as learning opportunities. My team developed a growth mindset curriculum to help students see that intelligence and ability grow through effort and reflection.

Teach students how to think, not just what to know. I use computational thinking strategies, like decomposition, algorithmic thinking, abstraction, and pattern recognition, to build problem-solving skills and confidence. When students engage in hands-on learning and "drive" their own understanding, they retain knowledge more deeply.

Above all, relationships are the heart of teaching. Show up. Be present. Support students in and out of the classroom. Many educators shaped my own journey, from my parents, both lifelong teachers, to the coaches and teachers who believed in me. Their impact reminded me that the most important part of teaching is how you make students feel."

Is there something your students know about you that others might not—any fun traditions or classroom quirks?

"One of the unique aspects of my classroom that students quickly come to appreciate is the use of 'Lucky Ducks.' Each student is assigned a small rubber duck with their name written on the bottom, which I use as a randomized and equitable method for calling on participants during discussions. This practice ensures that every student has

an equal opportunity to share their thoughts, while also creating a fun and engaging classroom culture.



Over time, this simple tradition has grown. Students often bring me ducks they’ve found or collected, and I incorporate them into lessons across multiple content areas. For example, I’ve used miniature ducks to model the states of matter—solid, liquid, and gas—in science. When studying ecosystems or Earth’s spheres, the ducks help illustrate how living things interact with their environments. I’m currently brainstorming creative ways to include them in our space unit as well.”

What’s your go-to method for self-care or staying grounded during the school year?

“One of my go-to methods for self-care is spending quality time with my family. It can be dinner together or a weekend outing that helps me reset and remind me of what’s most important. I also find a lot of peace and clarity in nature. Hiking in the hills or just spending time outside in my yard and garden helps me reconnect. I also enjoy baking, cooking, and canning, and going to my gym to focus on my physical and mental health.”

If your students could take away just

one lasting lesson from your class, what would you hope it is?

“I hope my students leave with the understanding that we are all in this together and that supporting one another is more powerful than competing against each other. Too often, I see students viewing the world as a race, where only a few can succeed. I want them to see their peers as teammates, not rivals. Whether it’s football players cheering on the soccer team or students who compete on weekends but may someday play on the same high school team, I remind them that collaboration and community make us all stronger.

I also want them to know that I will always be their supporter, not just in class, but beyond it. Some of my favorite moments are when former students greet me years later, still remembering the fun and encouragement they experienced in my classroom.

Fun is another essential part of learning. Over the years, I’ve learned that when I’m having fun, my students do too, and that joy creates the best environment for growth.

Lastly, I want them to value inclusion and equity. Everyone deserves a seat at the table, and more is achieved when we welcome diverse voices and ideas. Whether as classmates, teammates, or future colleagues, we can always learn more by listening to those who might not always be heard.

That’s the lesson: support each other, including everyone, and have fun along the way.”



CONGRATULATIONS!

South Dakota Teacher of the Year

Becky Haenfler | Avon School District

Get Ready for SDEA Lobby Day 2026!

Mark your calendars for Monday, March 2, 2026! Join us for an exciting and informative trip to South Dakota's State Capitol in Pierre. This is your chance to network with fellow Association members, engage with your elected officials, and gain insights from committee discussions and the afternoon session.

But that's not all! We're also gearing up to fight against school vouchers and advocate for our students and public education. Your voice matters: this is the perfect opportunity to make it heard.

Here's a sneak peek at what to expect:

- **Sunday Evening:** Meet with our SDEA Lobby Team.
- **Monday Morning:** Head to the Capitol bright and early for a day full of impactful activities.

SDEA will cover your hotel costs! About a week before the event, you'll receive a detailed agenda and hotel information.



**Sign Up for
Lobby Day
TODAY!**

<http://bit.ly/4qC4dus>



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Online professional development courses to fit your educational needs. Take discounted courses when and where you want after returning to school this fall!

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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.

SDEA/NEA OPPORTUNITIES

GRANT, SCHOLARSHIPS, CAREER

SDEA/NEA EARLY CAREER EDUCATOR AWARD

SDEA/NEA Early Career Educator Award

An individual member or a local may nominate an early career educator for this award. Each governance unit may select an Early Career Educator of the Year from nominations submitted in their unit. All the unit winners will be candidates for the statewide award, which will be announced at the 2023 Representative Assembly in Pierre.

Deadline: *December 1*

SDEA/NEA GORDON HORGEN SCHOLARSHIP

Gordon Horgen Memorial Scholarship

The South Dakota Education Association/NEA is calling for applications for the Gordon Horgen Memorial Scholarship, which is awarded to Native American students who are planning on entering the teaching profession. This scholarship was created by the 2014 Representative Assembly to honor the late Gordon Horgen from Winner.

Deadline: *February 15*

SDEA/NEA RAMIA BOERSMA SCHOLARSHIP

Ramia Boersma Scholarship

The South Dakota Education Association/NEA awards scholarships to outstanding students who are planning on entering the teaching profession. The Association may annually award up to three \$750 scholarships for each academic year.

Deadline: *February 15*

SDEA/NEA EDUCATORS RISING SCHOLARSHIP

Educators Rising Scholarship

The South Dakota Education Association (SDEA) Board of Directors is thrilled to announce the creation of the **Educators Rising Scholarship**. This four-year scholarship is designed to invest in the future educators of South Dakota, providing vital support to high school seniors who are passionate about pursuing a career in education.

Deadline: *February 15*

SDEA/NEA EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION GRANT

SDEA/NEA Educational Innovation Grant

The SDEA/NEA Educational Innovation Grant Program provides grants to members in support of innovative educational and student-oriented projects. The grant program funds new member-led projects. It does not fund projects on an on-going basis. The SDEA/NEA Educational Innovation Grants give preference to proposals that address student achievement, cultural diversity issues, include community partnerships, and can be duplicated by others.

Deadline: *May 1*

For more information on all grants and awards offered by SDEA, visit [SDEA.org](https://sdea.org).



Lisa Weier

Teaching and Learning Coordinator

Lisa.Weier@sdea.org



Free Self-Paced Online Courses

If you're looking to build your skills as an educator on your own time, your union membership gives you access to a huge array of free courses and options. In some districts, you may be able to get a salary boost for completing these courses.

Explore our FREE, self-paced digital learning courses by registering for SDEA BRIDGE, our professional development portal. Once you complete your registration, our system will automatically verify your membership. The portal is constantly being updated with new content, so be sure to check in often.



Micro-Credentials

A micro-credential is a short online course that you can complete on your own time and at your own pace. Many micro-credentials simply ask you to prove the skills and knowledge that you already have. NEA offers over 175 micro-credentials that have been created by educators for educators, on topics

ranging from climate change to classroom management. Be on the lookout this spring for a micro-credential cohort!



Independent Study and Blended Learning Courses

You can take a wide variety of independent study courses, webinars, and blended learning courses through NEA's Professional Excellence Portal. Take a two-part, two-hour course on cultivating mindfulness and well-being, or jump into a five-hour series on strategies to prevent bullying. Learn how to create a safer classroom environment for students or how to support English Language Learners. All courses are free for members. Check out the Professional Excellence Portal.

Contact your local president to schedule a training to learn more about the free professional development opportunities available with your membership.

2026 SDEA/NEA Election

Board of Directors Positions

OFFICER:

President	(1) 3-year
Vice President	(1) 3-year
NEA Director	(1) 3-year

BOARD:

Western	(1) 2-year
EGL	(1) 2-year
Plains	(1) 2-year
SEE	(1) 2-year
Eastern Prairie	(1) 2-year
Eastern Prairie	(1) 2-year

Note: Please include a 50-word statement of why you are running for the Board of Directors positions and a candidate photo.

2026 NEA RA Delegate Positions

ALL POSITIONS ARE FULLY FUNDED BY SDEA

Western	2
EGL	1
Plains	1
SEE	1
Eastern Prairie	2
Minority At-Large**	1
At-Large	5

** This position represents SDEA's ethnic minority members but is open to any active or active-ESP member

Note: Please include a 50-word statement of why you are running for delegate to the NEA RA.

January 15, 2026 is the last day to notify Stephanie Hageman, SDEA/NEA President, of your intent to run for SDEA Board of Director position, At-large Board of Director position, or as a state-funded delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly.

Bylaw proposals are due **January 15, 2026**.

Members who wish to serve as a delegate to the 2026 NEA RA must indicate whether they want to be on the ballot as a state delegate and/or as a unit delegate. The NEA annual meeting will be held **July 3 – July 7** in **Denver, CO**. Candidate declarations are due **January 15, 2026**.

You may contact SDEA President, Stephanie Hageman, at Stephanie.Hageman@sdea.org or the SDEA Board of Directors' Election Staff Liaison, Brooke Quinlivan, at Brooke.Quinlivan@sdea.org.

Return completed forms by one of the following methods:

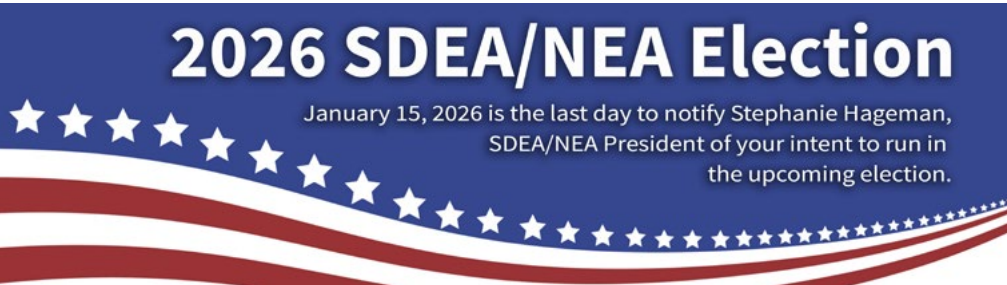
Mail:

SDEA President
Attn: Elections
411 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

Scan & Email:

Stephanie.Hageman@sdea.org
or
Brooke.Quinlivan@sdea.org

All necessary election forms and policies may be found online at www.sdea.org.



2026 Legislative Preview: Public Education at a Crossroads



As South Dakota heads into the 2026 Legislative Session, educators and public-school advocates face a challenging landscape. With economic indicators pointing to a slowdown and the Property Tax Reduction Task Force recommending changes that directly target public schools, funding for South Dakota's public schools is under serious threat.

The Task Force's proposal to cut five percent from the state budget roughly \$123 million from a total \$2.46 billion general fund—to fund property tax relief could have devastating consequences for local public schools. Among its recommendations are restrictions on capital outlay flexibility and limitations on school districts' ability to opt out of the state's funding formula—tools that have historically helped schools balance local budgets.

One of the most significant changes includes requiring every opt-out to go directly to a public vote, with a 60% supermajority needed for approval. This replaces the current system, where school boards can approve opt-outs unless referred to a vote by petition. Last year, school districts opted out for \$34 million. These local decisions have been essential for maintaining staffing, programs, and facilities, especially in districts with limited state support.

These proposed changes come at a time when districts are already grappling with the expiration of ESSER funds and declining student enrollment. South Dakota received millions in federal ESSER funding to support learning recovery, mental health services, and staffing during the pandemic. With those funds ending in January 2025, districts face a steep fiscal cliff. Nationwide, the expiration of ESSER is expected to slash district budgets by an average of \$1,200 per student, with high-poverty districts hit hardest. [edtrust.org]

The combination of state budget cuts, federal funding losses, and enrollment declines means many schools are bracing for:

- Staffing cuts
- Larger class sizes
- Reduced student support services
- Fewer academic and extracurricular programs

Meanwhile, the push for school vouchers continues to gain traction nationally, and South Dakota is not immune. Despite concerns over the state's budget and resistance from the

Home School community—particularly around accountability, some lawmakers remain committed to expanding voucher programs. These efforts threaten to siphon even more public dollars away from public schools, undermining the very foundation of equitable education. These pressures are not unique to South Dakota. States like Arizona and Florida have seen ballooning costs and budget shortfalls after implementing or expanding voucher programs. Arizona’s universal voucher program, for example, grew from a projected \$65 million to \$332 million in one year, contributing to a \$1.4 billion budget deficit. Expanding vouchers will only make South Dakota’s budget worse.

Last year, educators successfully pushed back against legislation that would have criminalized librarians. But the culture wars are far from over. With 2026 being an election year, we anticipate a resurgence of attention-grabbing bills—many targeting students and restricting access to books and curriculum. These proposals distract from the real issues facing our schools and students.

So, what should lawmakers be focusing on? First and foremost, education funding

must be a priority. South Dakota’s teacher shortage is a persistent challenge, and while competitive pay is essential, it’s only part of the solution. Addressing the mental and behavioral health needs of both students and educators is critical. A healthy learning environment supports retention and improves outcomes for everyone. In a tight budget year, staying laser-focused on what schools truly need—resources, support staff, and safe, inclusive environments—will be key to improving education across the state.

Action Items for Educators and Advocates:

Sign up for the SDEA Lobby Line to stay informed and engaged.

- Talk to your local lawmakers, share your stories and advocate for your students.
- Attend local legislative coffees to build relationships and raise awareness.
- Make your voice heard at the Capitol by joining us for Lobby Day on Monday, March 2.

The 2026 Legislative Session will be a test of our collective resolve. But if we come together with one voice, we can protect and strengthen public education for all South Dakota students.



LOBBY LINE

Stay Informed.
Stay Empowered.
Join the Lobby Line!

It's ABOUT OUR KIDS.
SDEA
South Dakota Education Association

What is Lobby Line?

A must-have e-newsletter for SDEA members that delivers updates, key talking points, and insider info on:

- **Education funding**
- **Vouchers**
- **Professional Rights**
- **Students’ Rights**
- **And much more!**

Whether you’re advocating for your students and profession or just want to stay informed, Lobby Line helps you track how decisions are made and how you can make your voice heard.

SDEA's Aspiring Educator, Lucy Walker



Lucy Walker, an SDEA Aspiring Educator and student at Augustana University, has been appointed to the **NEA Aspiring Educator Advisory Council (ACAE)**. This national committee advises the NEA Board of Directors on policies and issues impacting Aspiring Educators and plays a key role in planning the **Aspiring Educators Conference in June 2026**. Congratulations, Lucy, on representing South Dakota and helping shape the future of education!



Local Treasurer's Training

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

Contact Holly Frederick at holly.frederick@sdea.org and Lathie Under Baggage at lathie.underbaggage@sdea.org to set up your training date!



It's hard for me to believe that summer is gone, fall is nearly over, and winter is on its way. We have already had several of our pre-retirement/retirement seminars across the state. If any of your locals are interested in hosting one in your area, please don't hesitate to contact LouAnn Jensen at 605-220-1688.

We have also begun our social season to gather input from you and to keep you informed about what's happening at SDEA and SDEA-Retired. Watch for emails announcing times and locations. If none are in your area, please let us know that you are interested in having one, and we will arrange a social gathering near you.

Now is the time to begin having conversations with your friends and neighbors about the importance of keeping education funding in South Dakota's Public schools. We look forward to visiting with you at socials, retirement seminars, and the annual

meeting on March 27, 2026, in Pierre.

We're getting ready for another season of the Retired Educators Book Club—and we'd love your input! Before we choose our next reads and set up meeting times, we want to hear from you.

Please take a few minutes to fill out this short survey:



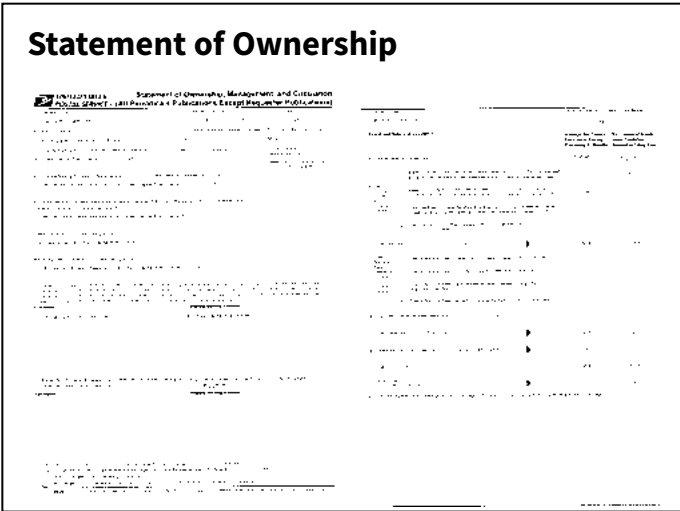
Mary Jane Chiles
SDEA Retired President

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

SDEA Retired Staff Liaison:
LouAnn Jensen | 605-220-1688
LouAnn.Jensen@sdea.org



Join SDEA Retired Now
bit.ly/3WNRNGA





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South Dakota
Education Association



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UPCOMING EVENTS

November

- 17-21 American Education Week
- 18 SEE Unit Meeting @ Garretson, SD
- 27 Thanksgiving (SDEA offices closed)
- 28 Thanksgiving observed (SDEA offices closed)

December

- 1 Early Career Educator Award nomination deadline
- 7 SDEA Budget Committee
- 24-1/1 Christmas Vacation (SDEA offices closed)

January

- 8 Eastern Prairie Unit Meeting
- 13 Western Unit Meeting
- 20 SEE Unit Meeting @ Madison, SD
- 24 Plains Unit Meeting
- 26 EGL Unit Meeting
- 30-31 SDEA Board of Directors Meeting
- 31 SDEA Budget Committee