

THE EDUCATORS'

ADVOCATE

MAY/JUN 2026
Volume 57 | Issue 5



SUMMER ACADEMY

July 19–21st

AUGUSTANA
UNIVERSITY



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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. DT460526

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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.

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President's Corner

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One Year In: Progress, Advocacy, and the Work Ahead

My first year as your SDEA President has been incredibly meaningful. It has included important conversations, strong advocacy, and continuous learning. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in this role. Our progress in elevating the profession, earning respect for public education, and protecting educator autonomy would not have been possible without you—your voice, commitment, and dedication to students, colleagues, and public education.

As the legislative session ended a few weeks ago, I want to thank those who stepped up to advocate for public education. Your efforts made a real impact. Lobby Day was a powerful example. Nearly fifty members proudly wore “I ❤️ Public Schools” shirts and engaged directly with legislators on critical issues impacting our profession. One member’s discussion with the House Education Committee Chairwoman became the highlight of a floor speech and helped defeat HB1217. By defeating this bill, we protected SDEA, our local associations, educators, and students. That is the power of your voice.

We cannot lose momentum. Public education continues to face significant challenges, and the next few weeks are critical. In this issue, you will find SD-EPIC’s

recommendations for pro-public education candidates in the June 2 Primary Election. These endorsements are thoughtful and intentional—leaders who stand with us and for our students. Now, they need us.

I urge you to take action. Support at least one endorsed candidate—volunteer, talk with colleagues, family, and friends, and encourage others to get involved. Most importantly, be sure to VOTE, either on Election Day or by absentee ballot. Our collective voice extends beyond the classroom to the ballot box.

Thank you to everyone who attended the SDEA Representative Assembly. Your engagement keeps SDEA strong and member-driven. The opportunity to connect and collaborate was energizing, and I hope you left ready to finish the year strong.

Finally, as we sustain our profession, we must also care for ourselves. This summer, I encourage you to rest and recharge. Spend time with family, go outdoors, or simply slow down. You have earned it.

Thank you for everything you do. Your work matters. Your voice matters. Together, we will continue moving public education forward.



A Word from Our NEA Director

Kelsey Lovseth
NEA Director
kelsey.lovseth@gmail.com

May Day and the Labor Movement: A Guide for Teachers Union Members

May 1 — International Workers’ Day What Is May Day?

May Day, observed every May 1st, is International Workers’ Day — a global celebration of the labor movement and the workers who fought, sacrificed, and organized to secure the rights that millions enjoy today. Far from a relic of history, May Day remains a living reminder that the protections educators rely on — fair wages, safe working conditions, grievance procedures, and due process — did not arrive by accident. They were won. Originating from Hayward Market in Chicago in 1886, over 160 countries celebrate “Labor Day” on May 1st.

Why May Day Matters for Educators

Teacher unions stand on the same foundation laid by those early labor organizers. The struggles may look different today — bargaining tables instead of factory floors — but the stakes are the same: **dignity, equity, and voice** in the workplace. Here is what the labor movement has meant specifically for educators:

- **Collective Bargaining Rights** — The ability for teachers to negotiate contracts as a united body, rather than accepting whatever terms administrators dictate, is a direct inheritance of the labor movement.
- **Tenure and Due Process** — Protections against arbitrary dismissal allow educators to advocate for students and challenge unjust policies without fear of retaliation.
- **Planning Time and Workload Limits** — Early unions fought to ensure teachers were not simply expected to absorb unlimited responsibilities without compensation or relief.
- **Healthcare and Retirement Security** — Pension systems and benefits packages that many educators depend on were hard-won through decades of organized bargaining.
- **Safe School Environments** — Unions have been instrumental in advocating for adequate staffing, mental health resources, and physical safety standards in schools.





Carley Peterson Honored as 2026 Early Career Educator Award Recipient

Carley Peterson of Tri-Valley School District is the 2026 SDEA Early Career Educator Award recipient. The award honors SDEA members who excel in differentiating instruction, creating engaging lessons, building strong relationships with students, and participating in union and association work at various levels.

SDEA recognized Peterson for effectively meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, including English learners and students with IEPs. Through maintaining consistent routines, delivering accessible instruction, and engaging students actively, she fosters an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Beyond

the classroom, Peterson forges meaningful relationships with students and families through Together on Tuesdays, a grant-funded summer program that unites families for meals and activities and supports positive student outcomes during the school year.

Peterson also leads as a dedicated association member, serving on multiple local committees, organizing family engagement and charitable initiatives, and currently advocating on her local negotiations team. SDEA congratulates Carley Peterson on this well-deserved honor and thanks her for her commitment to students, families, and the education profession.

Pamela Prisinger Named 2026 SDEA Friend of Education Award Winner

The South Dakota Education Association (SDEA) has named Pamela Prisinger as the 2026 Friend of Education Award recipient in recognition of her lifelong dedication to



students and her continued service to public education in the Milbank School District.

A retired Milbank Elementary educator,

Prisinger has remained a constant and valued presence in local schools, serving extensively as a certified substitute teacher and frequently stepping in for long term and maternity leaves. Her leadership and commitment reflect SDEA's philosophy of supporting a high quality education for every student.

"Pam truly embodies the spirit of the Friend of Education Award," said Elizabeth Wagner, third grade teacher and Milbank Education Association member. "Even after retirement, she continues to serve our district with the same energy, compassion, and dedication that defined her teaching career. Her impact on our students, staff, and community has been lasting and meaningful."

Toni Sabrowski Named 2026 SDEA Education Support Professional of the Year



The South Dakota Education Association (SDEA) has named Toni Sabrowski the 2026 Education Support Professional of the Year, recognizing her outstanding contributions to students, public education, and the education support profession. The award honors an SDEA member whose work exemplifies excellence in professional practice, advocacy, and community engagement.

Sabrowski has served for more than a decade as a paraeducator at Robbinsdale Elementary School in Rapid City, where she works with students with severe and profound disabilities. Known for her patience, creativity, and dedication, she supports inclusive learning environments while ensuring students' IEP goals are met through individualized instruction and hands on supports. Her efforts help ensure every student feels valued, supported, and capable of success.

Beyond the classroom, Sabrowski is a longtime leader in the Rapid City Education

Association, currently serving as co lead paraeducator representative, and is deeply involved in her community as a co founder of the Black Hills Autism Society and a volunteer with Special Olympics. "Toni brings compassion, professionalism, and unwavering advocacy to everything she does," said RCEA President Stephanie Hunter. "She truly represents the very best of education support professionals in South Dakota."



2026 Representative Assembly



Know Your Contract with Brooke

Latest National K-12 News



Hello! Your well-deserved break is almost here. As we go into the summer, I thought I would update you on some of the latest K-12 news from the national level. Here are some important things that are happening right now:

- In March, a group of 21 states joined together and sued the Department of Agriculture (USDA), challenging new grant conditions that require recipients to certify that they will not use federal funds to “promote gender ideology” or provide “taxpayer- funded benefits” to undocumented individuals. With this, states collectively risk losing over \$11.6 billion in funds to feed children through the Child Nutrition Program, which includes the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.
- The Department of Education has recently announced an agreement to transfer all student aid and student loans to the Department of Treasury. The Treasury will now take over debt collection of defaulted student loans. Moving forward, the intent is for the Treasury to also assume responsibility over the entirety of loans as well as the federal student aid programs. This is the latest move in the administration’s efforts to close the Department of Education.
- Just this week, the Department of Education announced new priorities for school districts applying for grant programs. Starting May 13, the Department will prioritize grant applications for programs that aim to expand AI and its use in the classroom. Expanding the adoption of AI into education settings has been a priority of the Trump administration. This has been met with strong opposition, with opponents highlighting concern that AI is unstudied, unregulated, and has potential to be harmful to children.
- The Trump administration issued its proposed 2027 budget cut this month, requested \$76.5 billion for education. This is a \$2.3 billion dollar decrease from the 2026 budget. Of these cuts, \$8.5 billion is estimated to be eliminated from K-12 funding. This will mainly be seen in various grant cuts, particularly in programs for English learning and migrant assistance.

Brooke Quinlivan

SDEA General Counsel

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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.

Your Vote Matters: Why the June 2 Primary Is So Important

Important Election Dates

Primary Election Date
June 2, 2026

Voter Registration Deadline
May 18, 2026

Absentee Voting Begins
April 17, 2026

Check Your Voter Registration



<https://bit.ly/3ORLdKf>

For many South Dakota voters, the **June 2 primary means more than a first step.** In several legislative districts, the primary winner will represent you in Pierre during the 2027 Legislature. Sometimes, November has no contested race, so the primary may be your only chance to influence who speaks for your community.

That's why it's so important to take part in the primary—make your voice count by showing up and casting your vote.

Make Sure You're Registered—and Eligible to Vote

Start by checking your voter registration today. This quick step ensures you can vote in your district's primary. If there's no real contest in November, this is your chance to make your voice heard in June. Don't miss the opportunity to influence the decisions that shape your schools, community, and state policies—act now!

Voter Registration Form:

<https://bit.ly/48eGWHk>



Learn About the Candidates

Take time to learn about who's on your ballot. If you care about strong public schools, check the SDEA Educator Votes list of **pro-public education candidates.** Knowing where candidates stand means you can cast an informed vote for the future of South Dakota's schools and communities.

Log into SDEA Educators Vote:

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



Vote Early and Have a Plan

Don't leave voting up to chance. Make a concrete plan to vote—early voting is available to fit any schedule or avoid last-minute problems. **Decide when, where, and how** you'll vote, put it on your calendar, and encourage friends and family to do the same. Having a plan makes it much more likely you'll take part and that your vote will count.

The June 2 primary will help decide South Dakota's Legislature well before January 2027. By registering, staying informed, and voting, you ensure your voice and priorities shape your community. **Don't sit this out—step up, vote, and make the difference only you can make.**

2026 June 2 Primary Recommendations

Here are the candidates recommended by the South Dakota Educators Political Involvement Committee (SD-EPIC) PAC for the June 2 Primary Election. Each of these candidates has shown strong support for pro-public education policies. These recommendations are current as of April 27. For more details about the 2026 Primary Election, visit:



<https://bit.ly/3QBvMGH>

State House Primaries

District 1**

Nick Fosness *
Danny Kjos

District 2

Brandon Lane
Dawn Hill

District 3

Spencer Sommers
Timothy Hanigan

District 4

Kent Roe *
Ryan Kohl

District 6

Tim Czmowski *

District 7

Mellissa Heermann *
Roger DeGroot *

District 8**

Danny Brown
Todd Wilkinson

District 9

Randy Bury
Zach Mulder

District 11

Brian Mulder *
Keri K. Weems *

District 13

Jack R Kolbeck *
Nick Kotzea

District 14

Taylor Rae Rehfeldt *
Tyler Tordsen

District 16

Lisa Bogue

District 17

Chris Kassin *

District 18

Mike Stevens *
John R. Marquardt

District 19

Drew Peterson *

District 21**

Jim Halverson *
Wyatt DeJong

District 23**

Dick Werner

District 24**

Mike Weisgram

District 25**

Carrie Sanderson

District 26B

Angi Hanzlik

District 28B**

Lawrence (Larry)
Schmaltz

District 29**

Gary L Cammack
Gary Deering

District 30

Tim R Goodwin *
Trish Ladner *

District 33

Curt Massie *

District 34

Mike Derby *
Becky J Drury

State Senate Primaries

District 2**

David Kull *

District 3**

Katie Washnok

District 4**

Stephanie Sauder *

District 5**

Glen A. Vilhauer *

District 9**

Daryl Christensen

District 11

Graham Oey

District 13**

Dan Kippley

District 14**

Larry P. Zikmund *

District 17**

Sydney Davis *

District 18

Jean Hunhoff

District 19

Kyle Schoenfish *

District 21

Erin Tobin

District 26

Rebecca Reimer *

District 28**

Ryan M. Maher

District 29**

William J. Meirose

District 31**

Randy Deibert *

District 32

Helene Duhamel *

District 33

David Johnson

District 34

Jason E. Green

District 35**

Nicole Mitzel

* Friendly

Legislator

Incumbent

** No General

Election Contest



Enroll Today!

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

Learn More: virtualeduc.com/sdea

Educators Stand Strong for South Dakota Public Schools

Lawmakers concluded the main run of the 101st Legislature, and for public education the session was largely one of defense — with several meaningful steps forward.

Education Funding

The question every legislative session brings is whether education will receive a funding increase — and by how much. The final budget included a 1.4 percent increase to the funding formula. While that figure falls short of keeping pace with inflation, the outcome warrants perspective: the session opened with some legislators proposing a five percent cut to education funding as a vehicle for property tax relief, and Governor Rhoden proposed freezing the formula entirely. SDEA members responded by sending hundreds of postcards and emails to the Capitol, and that engagement made a difference. Appropriators ultimately found room in a tight budget to provide schools with modest relief — a small but meaningful victory.

Funding Wins

Three pieces of legislation signed by Governor Rhoden reflect genuine progress for students and schools.

HB 1082 will provide free school lunch to approximately 10,000 students across the state. Rep. Kaydn Wittman championed the effort for four consecutive years, and this session found a partner in newly appointed Sen. Brandon Wipf to carry it across the finish line. The bill represents a direct benefit to students and families throughout South Dakota.

SB 106, led by Sen. Stephanie Sauder, adds \$1 million to the Special Education Extraordinary Cost Fund — the first increase to that fund since 2014. Districts that had exhausted their special education

resources were receiving only prorated reimbursements, forcing them to draw on other funding sources to cover services they are legally required to provide. This appropriation is intended to close that gap.

HB 1262, championed by Rep. Lana Greenfield, allocates \$2 million to launch a behavioral health day school in Aberdeen. The program will serve school districts in the region seeking placement options for students with behavioral health needs, and is envisioned as a model for future regional programs across the state.

Attacks on Educator Voice

Educators also successfully opposed legislation designed to limit their professional representation. HB 1217 was a direct attempt to curtail how SDEA represents educators across the state. Members responded with hundreds of emails and direct conversations at legislative coffees and community events. The bill was soundly defeated on the House floor. Representatives Lana Greenfield and Amber Arlint stood as champions for educators during the debate, but it was member engagement that proved decisive.

Charters and Vouchers

Two perennial efforts to redirect public school funding were again turned back. **SB 218**, which would have created charter schools in South Dakota and diverted funding from public school districts to unaccountable entities, was defeated. So too was **HB 1168**, a voucher proposal that would have redirected millions in taxpayer dollars away from public schools.

Attacks on School Boards

SDEA worked alongside public education partners to defeat a series of bills aimed at restricting school boards’ ability to manage their own budgets. Among them:

- **SB 223** would have changed the timeline and lowered the signature threshold required to bring an opt-out to a public vote.
- **SB 183** would have imposed a burdensome and costly notification process on opt-out elections.
- **SB 229** sought to require a public vote each time a district issued a capital outlay certificate.

When those measures failed individually, their provisions were reintroduced as hog house amendments to **HB 1241** and **HB 1323**. All carried unfunded mandates and were designed to impede local school boards’ financial decision-making. Through sustained, coordinated advocacy, the education community defeated each attempt.

Member Engagement

Educator engagement this session reached notable levels. SDEA personally delivered more than 600 postcards and thank-you notes to lawmakers. Activity through Lobby Line and SDEA’s advocacy platforms was high, and Lobby Day had the highest attendance in recent years.

“Several lawmakers told us they very much appreciated the thank-you notes and postcards — many displayed them proudly at their Capitol desks.”

Legislators directly credited one-on-one conversations with educators as influencing their votes on bills such as **HB 1217**. While SDEA’s lobby team works the Capitol daily, it is member engagement that ultimately shapes outcomes.

The SDEA legislative team extends its gratitude to every educator who advocated for students, schools, and the profession this session. As the 101st Legislature concludes, we encourage members to continue reaching out — thanking lawmakers who supported public education strengthens relationships that will matter when the 102nd Session convenes.

2026 SDEA Election Winners

The SDEA/NEA Elections Committee met on April 17, 2026, to count and certify the results of the election.

SDEA Officers

SDEA President

1. Stephanie Hageman

SDEA Vice President

1. Jennifer Milliken

NEA Director

1. Rob Dahlenburg

Board of Directors

Western

1. Ann Anderson

Eastern Prairie

1. Kayla Sylvester
2. Tim Eckart

EGL

1. Olivia Forman

SEE

1. open position

Plains

1. Kim Doherty

NEA RA UNIT DELEGATE WINNERS

Western

1. Jennifer Macziewski
2. Heather Harmon

EGL

1. Emily Meyer

Eastern Prairie

1. Lisa Jennings
2. Kayla Sylvester

Plains

1. Shawn Olsen

Ethnic Minority At-Large

1. Curtis Anderson

AT-LARGE DELEGATES

1. Tim Eckart
2. Jeremy Schultz
3. Robert Dahlenburg
4. Kathy Olsen

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

SDEA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Register on Bridge
bit.ly/3Pnntdh

Lisa Weier
Teaching and Learning Coordinator
Lisa.Weier@sdea.org | 605-222-1920

2024–2025 Professional Development Data

Online Courses Offered	Continuing Education Contact Hours Issued	Graduate Credits Issued	In-person Trainings	Total Enrollment
42	1,447	443	984 people	757

Take a look at some exciting book studies and podcast courses we will be exploring this summer!



- Registration will open **May 1**.
- The summer book studies will run **May 18 – August 1**.
- Each book is worth **one graduate credit** or **15 CECH**.

SDEA Scholarship Recipients

Gordon Horgen Scholarship

SDEA awards scholarships to Native American students planning on entering the teaching profession.

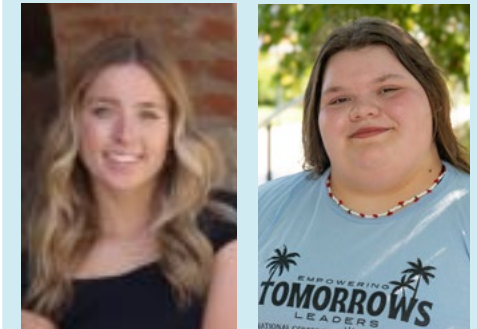


Samuel Skjonsberg
Pierre T.F. Riggs High School

Meleah Saucerman
Rapid City Central High School

Educator Rising Scholarship

SDEA awards scholarships to high school students that are involved in their local Educator Rising Chapter, participate in local and statewide Educator Rising activities and are planning on entering the teaching profession.



Macy Wallenstein
Lennox High School

Hilary Polreis
Parkston High School

Ramia Boersma Scholarship

SDEA awards scholarships to outstanding students who are planning on entering the teaching profession.



Miranda Gonya
Madison High School

Kathleen Cook
Sturgis High School

Lucy Walker
Augustana



GET READY TO EMBRACE THE AWKWARD!



We are so pumped for our Summer Academy keynote with the one and only **Jason Freeman!** If you've ever felt a little "perfectly imperfect," you are going to love his vibe. But the fun doesn't have to end when he finishes his speech!

We'll have copies of Jason's hit book, **Awkwardly Awesome**, available for sale right after the session!

It's the ultimate guide to turning your quirks into your greatest strengths.

- **Keep the Momentum:** Take Jason's wisdom home and keep that "awesome" energy going all year long.
- **Double the Impact:** Not only are you investing in yourself, but **50% of the profits** from every book sold go directly toward funding our future professional development programs. It's a win-win!

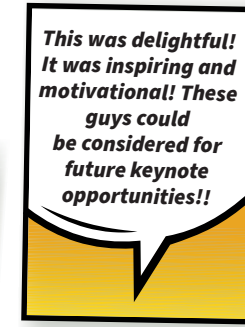
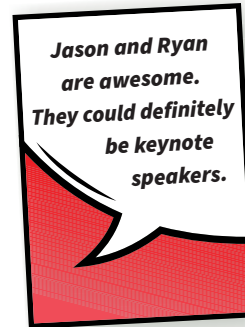
Come say hi, bring your cash, grab your copy, and let's celebrate being **Awkwardly Awesome** together!



Summer Academy registration is open!

Join educators from across districts for practical, relevant PD you can actually use. Register here: bit.ly/3NVvd9l

Members React: Jason Freeman's 2025 Summer Academy Session with Ryan Groeneweg



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Jason Freeman



As much as we may want it to be, life just isn't perfect and it can be a tremendous struggle

trying to figure out how to deal with all of its imperfections. Jason Freeman is a professional speaker, author, and podcaster who makes his living using the very same voice and speech impediment that he spent nearly thirty years of his life trying to hide, proving that sometimes our most awkward obstacles can become our most awesome gifts. He talks about the power of doing our

Imperfect Best, a concept for sustainable progress born out of his years struggling with perfectionism that helps users create informed and intuitive ways around their obstacles.

While Jason has never been a teacher, he was definitely a challenging student at times for many of his teachers. He can only imagine the frustrations, uncertainty, drama and other assorted imperfections that teachers have to navigate on a daily basis and he tips his proverbial hat to you.

Jason has given a TEDx Talk, has a Master of Fine Arts in Poetry—which he wants you to know, isn't quite as lucrative as you might think—and has eaten enough monster cookies to give Cookie Monster a run for his money.



Interested in presenting at Summer Academy?

We're seeking educators to share their expertise, best practices, and innovative ideas. Submit your session proposal using the RFP form: bit.ly/4km1p1S

SDEA/NEA OPPORTUNITIES

GRANT, SCHOLARSHIPS, CAREER



SDEA/NEA's ESP Award

SDEA/NEA's ESP of the Year Award recognizes the contributions of Education Support Professionals (ESPs) in their schools, communities, and their profession. The award is presented to a member of SDEA/NEA who demonstrates outstanding accomplishments and reflects the contributions of ESP to public education.

Deadline: November 1



SDEA/NEA Friend of Education Award

The South Dakota Education Association/NEA is seeking nominations for the Friend of Education Award.

- The nominee must be a person or organization outside of SDEA/NEA.
- The nominee should have proven to be a genuine friend of education, educators, and/or students.
- The nominee should reflect the philosophy and principles of the association.
- The nominee, through leadership, acts and support must have made contributions toward achieving a first-rate education for students in South Dakota.

Deadline: November 1



SDEA/NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards

The South Dakota Education Association/NEA is seeking nominations for the Human and Civil Rights Award to honor an individual, student group, or organization for their work in promoting human and civil rights.

Deadline: November 1



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 2027 Representative Assembly in Pierre.

Deadline: December 1

For more information on all grants and awards offered by SDEA, visit SDEA.org.



It's hard to believe that another school year is behind us. SDEA has requested our help in meeting with active teachers, especially new hires, and getting them to sign on as members. There will be a training in Chamberlain on June 14, with mileage and a double room provided. If you or you and a friend are interested, please contact Korey Erickson at 605-222-3905 for more details.

Due to increased publishing and postage costs it is likely that the *Advocate* is going to be offered digitally instead of mailed in print next school year. Please be sure we have your current non-school email address by contacting the Pierre Office at 605-224-9263, so you don't miss any SDEA news.

We are hoping to create local chapters of SDEA-Retired across the state. If you and a group of fellow retirees share a common interest, whether that is getting together to write to legislators or to help your local schools with special projects, we would like to support you and provide financial assistance to get your group started.

I hope you have a great summer and join us this fall refreshed and ready to be busy in whichever of our various activities interests you.

Mary Jane Chiles
SDEA Retired President

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

Pierre Office: 605-224-9263



**Join SDEA
Retired Now**
bit.ly/3WnrNGA

Local Treasurer's Training

- Responsibilities as an Association Officer
- Reporting Association Income and Expenses
- Important Tax Topics

Contact Holly Frederick at holly.frederick@sdea.org to set up your training date!

Contact a UniServ Director today! 605-224-9263

UPCOMING EVENTS

May

- 4-8 Teacher Appreciation Week
- 12 Western Unit meeting

June

- 15-17 SDEA Board/Staff Retreat - Chamberlain, SD
- 19 Juneteenth (SDEA offices closed)
- 28-7/1 Aspiring Educator's Conference - Denver, SD
- 30-7/2 Social Racial Justice Conference - Denver, SD

July

- 1 NCSEA Meeting - Denver, SD
- 3-7 NEA Representative Assembly - Denver, SD
- 19-21 SDEA Summer Academy - Sioux Falls, SD**

August

- 3-31 New Employee Orientations - Statewide



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