

# Zachary C. Schafer

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*Cultivating Life in the Rivers of Infinite and Intrinsic Beauty*

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## Education

University of Nebraska – Lincoln Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum, Learning and Education Emphasis: Education Studies - Science Education	All But Dissertation Current GPA: 4.0 Graduation: May, 2025
University of Nebraska – Lincoln Master of Arts in Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education Emphasis: Science Education	GPA: 3.956 Graduated: Aug, 2017
University of Nebraska – Lincoln Bachelor of Science in Fisheries and Wildlife with High Distinction Minor in Environmental Education + Business Dean's List December 2011 – May 2016	GPA: 3.985 Graduated: May, 2016
Teaching Endorsement: Secondary Biology	

## Professional Experience

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE Post-Doctoral Research Assistant	June 2025 – Current
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developing new curriculum for CASNR's SCIL 101 course</li><li>• Working with a team of researchers to develop course materials and plan research that speaks to the effectiveness of changes made in the curriculum process</li><li>• Conducting education focused research in regard to articulating the collaborative efforts necessary to create the systems and curriculum for a large lecture course that aims to provide first year college students a class that works to foster community and well-being through an experiential framework.</li></ul>	
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE Doctoral Student/Candidate	Aug 2021 – 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developed a model that crosscuts science education, restorative practices, psychological and social sciences, and the five major pillars of philosophy to be used as a part of my dissertation.</li><li>• Published five articles to date</li><li>• Trained multiple groups Teacher Scholar Academy students in Restorative Practices</li><li>• Offered second semester School-based Restorative Practices Training to Teacher Scholar Academy students.</li><li>• Collected observational data from Teacher Scholars for the purposes of program development and the development of future research.</li><li>• Taught TEAC 331 School and Society using a personally designed Restorative Practices and Narrative based curriculum</li></ul>	

- Advising practicum students apart of 397V – Field Experience.
- Co-taught Practicum 2 seminar and advised practicum students during their second field experience.
- Taught 403B seminar in student teaching and advised student teachers during their student teacher experience
- Developed a Module on Restorative Practices for Project Para
- Taught Modern Language and Culture as a part of the UNL Honors program
- Taught UHON 99H, working with/mentoring students who are currently developing professional skills in internship experiences.

Band of the Strong, Non-profit Organization, Omaha/Lincoln, NE                      July 2016 – Present  
President and Founder – [bandofthestrong.org](http://bandofthestrong.org)

- Founded a non-profit organization to provide musical and expressive arts opportunities to youth and families in need.
- Development of Narrative-Based companionship programming for grieving children and families that implements the use of expressive arts, nature-based experiences, and meditation.
- Collaborated and organized events by connecting multiple different parties and organizations including bands, community businesses, community non-profits, and international corporations.
- Worked with organizations based in childhood grief and other types of loss.
- The organization is based around the concept of companionship and what it means to walk with another person in life.
- Formed an affiliate partnership with Collective for Hope
- Formed a partnership with Angels Among Us
- Provided programming for the Munroe Meyer Institute
- Created a podcast that provides parents who have children with cancer an opportunity to share their story and find purpose in their journey by providing tips to other parents.
- Created a program to help the elderly walk through their end-of-life experience using narrative methodologies to walk alongside the elderly and their families.
- Providing Restorative Practices training and coaching as it pertains to underserved populations.
- Featured in Omaha Magazine
- Featured on 1011 News, KMTV - Omaha, and KLKN – Omaha for works done with Grief's Journey (Collective for Hope), the Munroe Meyer Institute, and Mourning Hope.

Shepherding Hearts LLC, Omaha, NE    Jan 2025 – Present  
Founder

- Worked with The Teacher Scholars Academy at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and The University of Nebraska-Omaha to provide Restorative Practices training to future educators. These trainings happened over the course of four years and were meant to scaffold student skills and learning with their development in undergraduate education.

Lighthouse, Non-profit Organization, Lincoln, NE    Aug 2018 – Dec 2023  
Director of Educational Services

- COA nationally accredited after-school program.
- Directed the Alternative Suspension Program: program that worked with youth suspended from Lincoln Public Schools. The goal was to help students restore broken relationships and find academic success.

- Designed and carried out independent research for program development and community change.
- Program based in Restorative Justice and personal research topics of: teaching, motivation, strength-based personality characteristics, and growth.
- Created and directed the Wilderness Explorers program designed to connect underprivileged youth to the natural world.
- Became a certified Restorative Practices trainer.
- Led community action project to create a community pantry/library.

Biology Teacher, Kearney High School, Kearney NE Aug 2017 – Aug 2018

- Taught 3 different variations of Biology: Optional Biology, General Biology, Microbiology.
- Further graduate research which was developed into a practitioner piece entitled *Empowering Salieri: Extracting the Genius in our Students*
- Wrote and received a grant for \$2,024 to purchase chest waders for Biology students so they could experience Biology firsthand in a nearby creek.

University of Nebraska Lincoln and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Ogallala Nebraska Research Biologist May 2013 - July 2013

- Surveyed and educated the public on Piping Plovers and Least Terns
- Observed and recorded how Piping Plovers and broods react to human interaction
- Connected with the natural world both a student and a teacher.

EPSCoR and Young Nebraska Scientists, Ogallala, Nebraska June 2015  
Teaching Assistant

- Aided UNL professor with student activities during a science camp (9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Monitored and modeled techniques for various scientific study methods.

Lincoln Public Schools – Community Learning Center, Lincoln, NE Jan 2014 – May 2016  
Huntington Elementary After School Educator

- Taught 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> students with various IEPs hands-on environmental education lessons
- Developed units consistent with school and state curriculum in science education.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE Aug 2015 – Aug 2016  
Click2 Science Educational Program Developer

- Developed a six-week, after-school STEM education program communicating UNL research in engineering to fourth and fifth graders by means of the natural world
- Author of a blog article for the Click2Science team on giving youth control of learning
- Creating new professional development resources.

## Publications

Schafer, Z. & Scharmann, L. (2021). Empowering Salieri – Extracting the “genius” in our students. *The Science Teacher*. 89(2). <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub/471>

Schafer, Z. & Scharmann, L. (2022). Understanding “Death”: Creating student opportunities for meaningful emotional expression in the science classroom. *The Science Teacher*. 90(1). <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub/500>

Schafer, Z. (2022). Restorative Practices Module for Para-Educators. *Project Para*. University of

Nebraska-Lincoln.

Schafer, Z. (2023). Heart-Stopping Rollercoasters: Restorative Practices, Motivation, and the Formation of a Science Identity. *The Science Teacher*. 90(5). <https://www.nsta.org/science-teacher/science-teacher-mayjune-2023/heart-stopping-rollercoasters>

Schafer, Z. and Trainin, G. (2023). Embracing uncertainty: A narrative case study on teacher-learner relationships through restorative justice practices in education. *The International Journal of Restorative Justice*. vol. 6 (Online first). <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnstudent/143/>

Schafer, Z. C., & Scharmann, L. C. (2024). Reimagining Science as a Natural Tool for Connection: A Restorative Approach. *The Science Teacher*, 91(5), 71–76. <https://doi-org.libproxy.unl.edu/10.1080/00368555.2024.2390552>

Schafer, Z. C., (2025) "Wondrous Uncertainty: Transforming Student Educational Experiences Using Restorative Practices". *Dissertations and Doctoral Documents from University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, 2023–. 264.

### **Publications In Progress**

Schafer, Z. C., Chan, E., Malgoubri, I., Faye, N., Friesen, K., Tamimdari, Z. (2025). Defining Foundational Knowledge in Teacher Education: A Collaborative Narrative Inquiry

Schafer, Z. C. (2025). Extending Restorative Practices to Curriculum: A Relational Approach to Teaching and Learning.

Schafer, Z. C. (2025). Embracing the Elephant: A Narrative Inquiry of a Family's Journey through the End-of-Life of a Loved One into the Beginnings of Grief.

### **Conference Presentations**

National Association for Children's Grief (NACG). Poster Presentation on Grief through the Lens - Photography as a Narrative Sense-Making Medium. June 2025

American Educational Research Association (AERA). Defining Foundational Knowledge in Teacher Education: A Collaborative Narrative Inquiry. April 2025

American Educational Research Association (AERA). Extending Restorative Practices to Curriculum: A Relational Approach to Teaching and Learning. April 2025

Wild Great Plains Conference on the topic of Youth Programming Inspiring Curiosity and Healing Through Nature. Panel Member. April 2025

American Educational Research Association (AERA). Paper Presentations on Embracing Uncertainty: A Narrative Case Study on Teacher-Learner Relationships Through Restorative Justice Practices in Education. April 2024

National Association for Children's Grief (NACG). Poster Presentation on the Integration of Restorative Practices, Narrative Methodologies, and Storytelling Programming that Uses the Creative Arts. June 2024

## **Professional Development**

Restorative Practices Training (Restorative Solutions and IIRP)

Coaching/Training for Restorative Practices (Restorative Solutions and IIRP)

Grief Companionship Training Program (Mourning Hope Grief Center)

Project Wild Certification (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission)

Beyond Bats Certification (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission)

Growing Up Wild Certification (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission)

Youth Fishing Instructor Certification (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission)

## **Awards**

Jerry Joyce Legacy Award – 2024

Othmer Fellowship Award – 2021, 2022, 2023

Paul and Edith Babson Fellowship Award – 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024

Brownell Fellowship Award – 2022, 2024

Donald McCurdy Fellowship in Science Education – 2023, 2024

Featured on KMTV as a part of Positively the Heartland for work at Band of the Strong – 2021

Featured on KLKN as a part of Camp Munroe for work at Band of the Strong – 2021

Featured in Omaha Magazine for work at Band of the Strong – 2020

Volunteer of the Year – Awarded by Grief's Journey to Band of the Strong – 2019

Featured on 1011 News as a part of Lances Journal for work at Band of the Strong – 2018

Dean's List, School of Natural Resources 10 semesters – 2011 - 2016

## **Service – General**

Guest Presenter for Teacher Scholars Academy – University of Nebraska-Omaha College of Education and Human Sciences, Presenting on Restorative Practices and Reflective Listening, January, 2024

Guest Presenter for Teacher Scholars Academy – University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Education and Human Sciences, Presenting on Restorative Practices and Reflective Listening, Fall and Spring, 2022, 2023, 2024

Speaker – University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Business, Presenting on Authenticity, Bringing Meaning to Your Life Story and Finding Personal Dignity, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, 2023, 2024

Guest Presenter for TEAC 161 – University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Education and Human Sciences, Presenting on Approaching Death and Loss as an Educator, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Live Twitter Chat – Author Invitation from NSTA, Q&A in regard to my feature article in the Science Teacher: Empowering Salieri – Extracting the Genius in our Students, January 13, 2022.

Speaker Invitation – University of Nebraska-Lincoln Racial Literacy Roundtables, Presenting on Restorative Practices and Racial Equity, April 14, 2021.

Speaker on a National Webinar through – University of Nebraska-Lincoln Click2Science, Speaking about Published Blog Article on Youth Development, Spring, 2016

## **Grant Awards**

2024 National Association for Children's Greif and The New York Life Foundation – \$15,000  
This money was allocated for the development of a community-driven evaluation tool to better understand the impact of programming done through Band of the Strong.

2024 Fraternal Order of Eagles – \$2,500  
This money was allocated for programming costs in relation to Band of the Strong.

2024 Jerry Joyce Legacy Award – \$2,500  
This money was allocated for any costs in relation to Band of the Strong including programming, administration, research, and other organizational needs.

2024 Price Fund - a Lauren Daigle Foundation and the Community Foundation of Middle TN – \$1,000  
This money was allocated for any costs in relation to Band of the Strong including programming, administration, research, and other organizational needs.

2024 Omaha Mom Prom – \$26,000  
This money was allocated for any costs in relation to Band of the Strong including programming, administration, research, and other organizational needs.

2023 Fraternal Order of Eagles – \$110,000  
This money was allocated for any costs in relation to Band of the Strong including programming, administration, research, and other organizational needs.

2022 Nebraska Arts Council – \$1,000  
This money was provided as a 1-to-1 match of funds to support a four-session program for grieving families. The program was ran through Band of the Strong in collaboration with The Collective for Hope.

2019 Nebraska Arts Council – \$800

This money was provided as a 1-to-1 match of funds to support a single event/program for young people in low SES situations. The program was ran through Band of the Strong in collaboration with The Bay in Lincoln, Nebraska.

2019 Beth and Harris Cooper Foundation – \$1000

This money was allocated for any costs in relation to Band of the Strong including programming, administration, research, and other organizational needs.

2017 Class Act Grant for – \$2024

This money was used to purchase an entire class set of neoprene hip waders for my high school biology students. With the hip waders, we were able to explore the creek in the outdoor classroom behind our high school.