



Report for Sydney Pilling at KDPA

Region: Great Lakes

Below is a summary of scores and feedback from all the usable evaluations which were submitted for you during the 2026 Flight Training Experience Award application period. Many flight training providers receive exceptionally high scores so we also share with you the distribution of the overall aggregate scores for comparison.

1. Eligibility

To be eligible for an award, you needed to receive at least 5 unique evaluations, each at least 80% complete

A survey response was considered 'usable' if the respondent answered at least 80% of the questions required for scoring.

A CFI was considered 'eligible' for an award if they received at least 5 unique, usable responses.

Average scores were based on all usable responses received and have been rounded where necessary.

Your percentile rank was calculated by comparing your score to scores of all other (nominated/eligible) CFIs. Percentile ranks were calculated at both national and regional levels and may have been rounded.

Your performance (percentile rank) compared to all other eligible CFIs in your region was one of many factors that informed award decisions.

You received 39 evaluations.

2. Free Responses

At the end of each evaluation, we ask the following open-ended question:

Why should or shouldn't your CFI win a Flight Training Experience Award?

3. Individual Overall Scores & Responses

Total Score	Student Review
90.00	She is the best instructor I have ever had. She is very down to earth and very knowledgeable I have been with her for about 2 years and she make training fun and informative and I have learned better with her then anyone else
90.00	Sydney is an exceptional instructor. Her instructional knowledge surpasses any instructor I have ever worked with throughout my training. For one, safety ALWAYS came first. If it wasn't for her guidance and skills I would have not gotten to where I am today as quickly as I did. Whenever I was in my head or had doubts she knew exactly what to do to keep my head high. When I think of this award the only person that comes to mind is Sydney Pilling.
90.00	She has spent lots of her free time training students going beyond what is expected
90.00	Sydney goes above and beyond to be a great instructor

90.00	Sydney has an exceptionally rare intersection of passion of generational flight and general aviation, and passing that gift onto the next generation of aviators. She has consistently been by my professional side with the right answer to a challenging question, or guidance on how to inspire my trainees. In times of challenge and doubt in my instructional career, I find myself inspired to learn and improve by Sydney's intrepid and courageous need to overcome adversity for her own love of flight, and dedication to her applicants. I cannot think of anyone in my professional circle who is more deserving of recognition of their continuous strive for excellence in the face of adversity than Sydney.
84.00	Sydney is VERY passionate about flying and teaching. I understood that since the very first lesson. She has a strong commitment with the aviation community about teaching. She is a very complete pilot: skilled, confident, safety minded and disciplined. She always finds the way of making the toughest lessons easy to understand and making sure everything is very clear by the end of it. During all my training she was very patient, detail-oriented and so professional. As an international student, not even a language barrier could stop her from teaching me everything I should know about the FAA!
90.00	Sydney Pilling is an exceptional flight instructor who truly embodies the spirit of aviation education. Over the past two years, she has demonstrated unwavering dedication not only to her students but also to fostering a supportive community of women in aviation. She helped launch our female aviation group and remains an active, motivating presence — always connecting, mentoring, and encouraging others through our WhatsApp group, local fly-outs, and in person volunteering through Women in Aviation. Her passion for flying and teaching is contagious, and her Gold Seal certification reflects both her skill and commitment to excellence. She consistently goes above and beyond to ensure her students succeed while creating an inclusive, positive learning environment.
90.00	She is a great instructor, who values providing quality flight instruction, encouraging safety, and continuous learning.
90.00	Sydney was my instructor for my PPL and then my check airman for my instrument phase checks. She has taught me so many valuable lessons that I feel like I would not be where I am today if not for her. She helped me with each and every step along the way. Helping look at college, weigh the pros and cons, getting my private, and now my instrument phase checks. Sydney has been the best instructor I've flown with and continues to give me valuable lessons and tips along the way of my aviation journey.
88.00	I have known Sydney Pilling from student assistant to the Flight Supervisors at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University through attaining her Commercial and CFI. I have flown with Sydney many times and utilized her to help with ground instruction with my own flight students. Sydney has always demonstrated great attention to detail, aeronautical skills, knowledge and decision making. Our first c0-student passed his Private Pilot Checkride with flying colors! Sydney and I were also members of the local CAP for a short time as well. I continue to hear great things about Sydney and she would be well deserving of recognition!
85.00	Sydney is one of the most experienced and knowledgeable flight instructor I've flown with. She gets along well with anyone in the flight deck while maintaining a safe and professional demeanor. She always offers help when needed or if someone has a question, and almost always has an answer.
90.00	Sydney is a very dedicated and knowledgeable instructor. She goes above and beyond for her students, making sure they not only have more than sufficient knowledge to be great pilots but that they have the confidence and independence to be great pilots. She strives to make IAA a great learning environment and has made a positive influence on students and staff around her.
86.00	Very thorough with her students, phase checks and recommendations. Very considerate of her students and her colleges. Always learning but also willing to share with other less experienced instructors. Extremely stable as an individual no matter what else seems to be going on. Willing to seek advice when not absolutely sure.
90.00	She's the smartest instructor I know! Is amazing at making things easy to understand and the friendliest person out there!

89.00	<p>I have had the pleasure of working with Sydney Pilling for over 2 years and is a highly regarded instructor among all of her colleagues. She is regarded as the subject matter expert on G1000 avionics and frequently assists both her colleagues and many students (both her own and others) gain proficiency in them. She actively promotes aviation organizations and groups to others to help further the aviation community around her and is the embodiment of aviation running through her blood. She goes out of her way to make sure others succeed, whether it be answering questions that take two minutes or staying late to make sure those around her have a full understanding of what they are studying. She takes the safety of herself and others very seriously and is always coming up with solutions to concerns and issues that others don't see or think about. She promotes community more than anyone I know, creating study groups and organizing outings to ensure that each student feels supported. She helped found a Women in Aviation group at our school that started out with 10 members and is now closer to 60! Sydney is a shining example of everything an outstanding CFI should want to be, making sure all of her students succeed to the best of her ability.</p>
74.00	<p>Excellent instruction.</p>
90.00	<p>Sydney has earned my recommendation for a flight training experience award for many reasons. Her ability to tailor her teaching to how I learn best turned my biggest challenges into my biggest successes. She creates a positive and safe environment where it is easy for me to ask questions and learn from mistakes. Sydney has made me a confident pilot, and her dedication to her students should be recognized.</p>
90.00	<p>Her dedication is unmatched. Sydney works hard for her students.</p>
90.00	<p>Sydney truly cares about her students and the education she's providing to future pilots. I've seen her prioritize safety time and time again and hold each student to a fair, but high standard within themselves. She's always kind and always in a pursuit of learning more to teach more.</p>
88.00	<p>Sydney has an exceptional ability to explain complex aeronautical concepts in a way that's clear, practical, and easy to apply in the cockpit. Their teaching style strikes the perfect balance between patience and precision — pushing students to reach higher standards while ensuring they always feel supported and confident.</p>
88.00	<p>She's one of the most motivated and inspiring flight instructors I've had worked with. Her passion for aviation is contagious, and she brings a great energy to the team. She's always supportive, approachable, and willing to help others.</p>
89.00	<p>I have known Sydney for the past three years, as she has been the primary Flight instructor for my daughter's flight training. As a retired military pilot with over 20 years of flying, and as a current part-121 airline Captain, I have seen and worked with many flight instructors over the course of 30+ years in aviation. I can say with confidence that Sydney is absolutely top-tier in all respects. Sydney's flying skill impressed me right away the first time I had the opportunity to fly with her in our family Cessna 310. Although she had zero experience in this particular complex-twin aircraft, she flew it as if she had many hours in it. I was impressed by her high level of situational awareness, attention to detail and impeccable flying skill. I quickly saw why my daughter respected her and looked up to her as a role-model. As both a pilot and father, what impressed me even more was the way Sydney cares for her students. With two children in aviation, I have seen several examples of flight instructors that simply use students as a means to build flight time to further their career. Regarding Sydney, this couldn't be the further from the truth. She organizes social events for the flight school's students, building comradery and encouraging teamwork that is the cornerstone of a career where trust and reliability are essential. Another example of her caring, Sydney organized a surprise birthday party for my daughter after she completed her final Commercial stage-check. She is always going above and beyond in caring for her teammates and students--and doing so has made the entire flight school community a better place to fly and learn.</p>
90.00	<p>Sydney Pilling exemplifies a flight instructor who understands the concept of making those around her better will only make her better. She has a clear passion for aviation and makes both her students and colleagues a priority. Between that and her friendly demeanor that seemingly allows her to be friends with everyone around her. She has a very clear desire to promote safety, discipline, and an environment that is both fun and rewarding. I would highly recommend her for this award. I can't think of any more deserving person that I have worked with.</p>
85.00	<p>Sydney has been my go to right hand girl for working with CFI applicants. She loves the ability and willingness to stick around to help students and fellow instructors out problem solve and or complete student requirements to continue to help them learn. She has always had a positive attitude and provide adequate constructive criticism. She continues to inspire young student pilots and current flight instructors to follow similar footsteps she has taken to become a well rounded and respected instructor.</p>

90.00	<p>Sydney Pilling should win the Flight Training Experience Award because she's simply the best, hands down, and let me tell you why. Sydney took me onto her already full schedule with open arms and dedicated her time to help me succeed in a quick and efficient manner. She has in-depth knowledge of her craft, and is humbly confident in her abilities. Sydney is timely, meticulous, and always on top of the administrative side of the job as well. Overall, she truly cares about her students. Sydney is always there when it comes to the mental or emotional challenges that this career field can bring, especially for female aviators. Whenever I had second guesses, fears, or anxiety, she was there to help me remain calm with her excellent ability to communicate (at any hour of the day might I add). I feel like I can always rely on Sydney no matter what phase I'm at in my training. At every bump in the road, Sydney stepped up to the plate and offered her help/assistance whether that was in training, someone to talk to, or even a little tough love when it was truly necessary. Not only that, she's a wonderful organizer who brings aviators together outside of training for group gatherings. Sydney has inspired me as a female aviator, and is a role model who I look up to and aspire to be like when it's my turn to become a CFI/II. When I look back years from now, I will always remember how she took me under her wing and helped me accomplish my goals. Sydney truly deserves to win this award.</p>
87.00	<p>Sydney is the epitome of what a CFI should be. She is highly credible, very humble and approachable, and is always willing to extend a helping hand not only to her students but to her colleagues. I can think of no one in my previous training experience or in my capacity as a colleague of Sydney's who is more deserving of this award.</p>
89.00	<p>Sydney was one of the most dedicated students that I have ever had. We started off flying together initially during her commercial certificate. We stayed fairly close through her completion of CFI and I saw the quality that she exuded with each lesson she taught.</p>
90.00	<p>It is both a privilege and an easy decision for me to recommend Sydney Pilling for consideration as the AOPA Instructor of the Year. Over several years of flying and working together, I've had the pleasure of getting to know Sydney both professionally and personally. Throughout this time, she has consistently demonstrated exceptional character, motivation, and integrity. Sydney is a driven, goal-oriented individual who embodies the qualities any organization would seek. Her sound judgment, maturity, and passion for aviation are evident in everything she does. She approaches each challenge with professionalism, enthusiasm, and a genuine desire to excel. Above all, she is dedicated to helping her students succeed and works relentlessly to support their achievement. I have no doubt that Sydney would be a tremendous asset to any team and would be a deserving recipient of the AOPA Instructor of the Year award. Her strong work ethic, talent, and positive attitude make her not only dependable but also someone whom others naturally respect and enjoy working with. It would be a privilege to see her contribute to—and thrive within—your esteemed organization under this recognition. I recommend Sydney Pilling with the highest confidence and enthusiasm for the AOPA Instructor of the Year. Thank you for your time and consideration. Adam Eaton ORD, First Officer Envoy Air, inc.</p>
86.00	<p>For their effort in promoting aviation towards their students and helping to spread the industry towards a safer flying environment. Sydney has always exemplified a patient and adaptive instructor who is willing to adapt to her students needs.</p>
90.00	<p>Sydney should be considered for this award mainly due to her dedication to professionalism and her drive to ensure that students receive the highest level of instruction possible while being an advocate for the safety of all students and instructors at Illinois Aviation Academy. I have looked to Sydney on multiple occasions as a student and now as an instructor and colleague for knowledge and guidance without hesitation, and cannot imagine anyone better suited to receive such an award. She is truly an asset to the aviation community.</p>
84.00	<p>Sydney was a very knowledgeable colleague of mine at work. She would break down complex subjects to her students in ways her students would easily understand. More importantly, She did her best to relate to her students and guide them to succeed.</p>
86.00	<p>She is an amazing instructor and coworker. I had the pleasure of having her be my CFII for the CFII training while working alongside her. She knows the knowledge inside and out and even when I would do paperwork at my desk and listen in to her lessons, I was always able to take something away. Sydney is extremely professional and someone I greatly admire. I have worked for three flight schools and I can say she is the best coworker I have had to date.</p>

88.00	<p>Sydney Pilling was my instructor throughout my commercial pilot training, and I couldn't have asked for a better mentor. She maintained a high level of professionalism in the airplane while still knowing when to be a supportive instructor throughout the process. I had struggled during my private and instrument training because I never fully understood what was expected of me for each lesson. However, once I became Sydney's student, everything changed I always knew what I needed to prepare for each flight and how to progress toward becoming an excellent commercial pilot. My time training with her was one of the most rewarding experiences of my flying career, and now, as I transition into a flight instructor at the same school where Sydney taught me, I can truly appreciate the impact she had on my growth. She consistently pushed me to be my best, and without a doubt, she is my favorite instructor and genuinely deserves the AOPA Flight Training Experience Award.</p>
90.00	<p>I highly recommend this instructor for her outstanding professionalism, particularly in challenging situations. She consistently demonstrates composure, integrity, and dedication under adversity, setting an example for both students and colleagues. Her deep knowledge and extensive experience shine through in every lesson, creating a learning environment that is both engaging and effective. Her ability to stay calm, resourceful, and supportive, even under pressure, reflects her exceptional character and commitment to excellence.</p>
90.00	<p>I had taken about a year off from flying due to not being able to hold a medical and I wanted to get back in the air to knock some rust off and stay proficient. I contacted IAA and they put me in contact with Sydney who right off the bat was very understanding with the medical issue and was willing to work with me to get back into things. As a commercial pilot and a CFI-I, I should be held to a higher standard in terms of altitude and airspeed tolerances for maneuvers and instrument approaches, ground instruction content knowledge, etc., and Sydney did hold me to those standards, but gave me some grace knowing it had been a while since I had touched a flight control. Instead of just grilling me and expecting me to hold commercial pilot standards immediately, she provided me with great instruction and helped me gain confidence in my flying again. With me also being a CFI-I, we had good conversations about how used to teach things and why. On some of our longer flights, during the downtime of cruise, we bounced some ideas around on how to teach certain things to try and get a different perspective from each other. Not only did she help me become a better instructor, Sydney wanted to grow her own knowledge as much as possible in order to become the best instructor she could be.</p>
90.00	<p>Instructor is an outstanding teacher and colleague. They are always willing to step up when needed.</p>
88.00	<p>She has a passion for aviation</p>
90.00	<p>Sydney should win an award because of her passion for flying and helping her students. I have personally flown with her for over half her checkrides at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, so I can personally vouch for the amount of growth she has shown. Her evolution from a student to an instructor has always been backed by her desire to give the tools of success to others. My recommendation is founded on real experiences and conversations we have had in the flight deck and on campus. We had propeller governors fail on our flights as well as dealing with the challenges of central Florida's airspace. Sydney's heart towards helping her students is empowered by the style of teaching and support system she found at Embry-Riddle. She carries her knowledge to her lessons to bring effective teaching and improve the overall safety of our airspace system.</p>
74.00	<p>I Miguel Rueda, First officer at aloha air cargo on the 737 would like to write this letter as It is my privilege to recommend Sydney for Flight instructor of the Year. I have known Sydney back when she was in flight training. Her dedication to her future students was apparent early on from the amount of work she put into her CFI training. She was a well rounded applicant who volunteered in aviation organizations along side her training. In her time as an instructor, she has continued bettering her own knowledge, often revisiting old training videos, and asking fellow instructors questions. She continues her volunteering through the Young Eagles program and she even started the Lady Aviator Group at her flight school.</p>

4. Aggregate Overall Score (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the overall score you received from your customers in the 2026 Flight Training Experience Award application period:

Your Score: 88

4.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 86

Your national percentile ranking: 62%

Regional Average: 85

Your regional percentile ranking: 70%

4.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 87

Your national percentile ranking: 66%

Regional Average: 87

Your regional percentile ranking: 50%

5. SubScore Summary for at KDPA

Region: Great Lakes

The remaining sections summarize your individual subscores (range: 0 to 100) as they apply to each of the four areas from our Flight Training Experience Research: Educational Quality, Customer Focus, Community, and Information Sharing. You will also find national and regional averages, for benchmarking.

Subscore Summary:

	Your Score	National Avg
Educational Quality	100	98
Customer Focus	99	97
Community	94	92
Information Sharing	97	94
NetPromoter Score	100	95
Overall Total	98	95

6. Educational Quality Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Educational Quality; offering effective training from professional instructors who are dedicated to students' success

Your Score: 100

6.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 98

Your national percentile ranking: 66%

Regional Average: 99

Your regional percentile ranking: 70%

6.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 99

Your national percentile ranking: 79%

Regional Average: 99

Your regional percentile ranking: 79%

6.3 Responses per Question

My CFI consistently used a training syllabus that I could consult.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	39	100%

My CFI tailored their lessons plans to accommodate my personal strengths and weaknesses.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	38	97.44%
Somewhat Agree	1	2.56%

I felt safe flying with my CFI.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	39	100%

My CFI helped me feel prepared for unexpected situations in flight.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	39	100%

7. Customer Focus Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Customer Focus; adding value by demonstrating professionalism and engagement with students

Your Score: 99

7.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 97

Your national percentile ranking: 46%

Regional Average: 95

Your regional percentile ranking: 43%

7.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 98

Your national percentile ranking: 58%

Regional Average: 98

Your regional percentile ranking: 36%

7.3 Responses per Question

My CFI patiently helped me understand difficult concepts.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	38	97.44%
Somewhat Agree	1	2.56%

I feel like my CFI made efficient use of my time.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	39	100%

My CFI was not invested in my success.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	2	5.13%
Strongly Disagree	37	94.87%

My CFI was reliable and on-time for scheduled lessons

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	39	100%

8. Community Focus Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Community; emphasizing social connections and accomplishments.

Your Score: 94

8.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 92

Your national percentile ranking: 52%

Regional Average: 91

Your regional percentile ranking: 63%

8.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 94

Your national percentile ranking: 53%

Regional Average: 94

Your regional percentile ranking: 50%

8.3 Responses per Question

After training with my CFI, I feel like a member of the general aviation community.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	36	92.31%
Somewhat Agree	3	7.69%

My instructor expressed that people like me should not fly.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	6	15.38%
Neither agree nor disagree	6	15.38%

Somewhat Disagree	1	2.56%
Strongly Disagree	26	66.67%

My CFI introduced me to students, new pilots, and members of the local aviation community.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	38	97.44%
Somewhat Agree	1	2.56%

My CFI shared relevant information to help me continue flying after training (e.g. how to find flying clubs, purchase an aircraft, or start an aviation career)

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	36	92.31%
Somewhat Agree	3	7.69%

9. Information Sharing Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Information Sharing; educating and empowering students to make informed decisions about flight training investments.

Your Score: 97

9.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 94

Your national percentile ranking: 60%

Regional Average: 92

Your regional percentile ranking: 63%

9.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 95

Your national percentile ranking: 68%

Regional Average: 95

Your regional percentile ranking: 50%

9.3 Responses per Question

I always understood the steps required to reach my flight training goals with my CFI.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	39	100%

My flight training with my CFI has required more time and/or money than I expected.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	2	5.13%
Somewhat Disagree	8	20.51%
Strongly Disagree	29	74.36%

Sometimes I did not know what my flight lessons would cover.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	2	5.13%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	2.56%
Somewhat Disagree	1	2.56%
Strongly Disagree	35	89.74%

My CFI introduced me to online resources (like flight planning tools or weather sources) and showed how they can be used to aid my decision making.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	39	100%

10. Net Promoter Score

10.1 Questionnaire Responses

The Net Promoter Score is generated by asking customers how likely they would be to recommend a given product or service - in this case, your services as a flight instructor to another potential customer, on an 11 point scale.

How likely are you to recommend your CFI to someone interested in flight training?

Response Choice	Frequency	%
10	38	97.44%
9	1	2.56%

10.2 NPS Grouping

Responses to this question are then used to sort customers into one of three groups:

Detractor: Less likely to use your services again and may not speak highly of your services to others.

Passive: Generally somewhat satisfied, passive respondents likely won't help or hurt your business in talking to other people.

Promoters: Ideally, all of your customers would be promoters. Promoters would fly with you again in the future and would tell others how great they think you are.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Promoter	39	100%

10.3 Standardized Score Calculation

The overall Net Promoter Score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of your customers who are 'detractors' from the percentage of your customers you are 'promoters.' Thus, the overall Net Promoter Score can range from - 100 to 100.

For more information on the Net Promoter Score and how to interpret it, check out: <https://www.medallia.com/net-promoter-score>

Your Score: 100

10.3.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 95

Your national percentile ranking: 60%

Regional Average: 84

Your regional percentile ranking: 63%

10.3.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 97

Your national percentile ranking: 62%

Regional Average: 97

Your regional percentile ranking: 57%