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South Dakota teachers, school counselors go above and beyond with professional certifications

PIERRE, S.D. – Four South Dakota teachers and three school counselors earned national certifications in 2020, demonstrating advanced knowledge and skill in their professions.

Teachers achieve National Board Certification through a rigorous, performance-based, peer-reviewed assessment of a teacher's pedagogical (teaching) skills and content knowledge. The certification process takes one to three years to complete. While licensing standards set the basic requirements to teach in a state, National Board Certified teachers demonstrate advanced teaching knowledge, skills, and practices similar to the certifications earned by experts in law and medicine. South Dakota's 2020 recipients of National Board Certification include:

- Nicole Finnesand, English Language Arts/Early Adolescence, Tri-Valley School District
- Denise McCormick, Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood, Douglas School District
- Kristina Tlustos, Literacy: Reading-Language Arts/Early and Middle Childhood, Rapid City Area Schools
- Megan Wollman, English Language Arts/Early Adolescence, Aberdeen School District

Ann Anderson, Generalist/Middle Childhood, Belle Fourche School District, renewed her National Board Certificate.

Due to the pandemic, the deadline for National Board candidates to complete submission of their applications was extended. Because of this, additional South Dakota teachers achieving National Board Certification may be announced later this winter.

The National Certified School Counselor certification recognizes counselors who demonstrate specialized knowledge and skills in school counseling. This certification shows that one has met national standards of practice, including additional education, experience, and a specialty exam. The following school counselors reported to the South Dakota Department of Education that they became National Certified School Counselors in 2020:

- Lane Madsen, Rapid City Area Schools
- Michelle Pliska, Garretson School District
- Danielle Schonebaum, Lyman School District

South Dakota teachers who earn National Board Certification receive \$2,000 per year for five years, with \$1,000 paid by the South Dakota Department of Education and \$1,000 paid by the teacher's school district. The department will also reimburse fees personally paid by teachers and school counselors, upon their achievement of national certification. As long as funds are available, the department will also pay National Certified School Counselors \$1,000 annually for five years.

To learn more about these certifications and stipend and reimbursement opportunities, visit <https://doe.sd.gov/nationalboard/> or call the South Dakota Department of Education at 605-773-3134.