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CONTACT: [Mary Stadick Smith](#), South Dakota Department of Education, 605-773-7228, or [Ruth Raveling](#), South Dakota Department of Education, 605-773-2593

South Dakota schools recognized as 2021 National ESEA Distinguished Schools

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Education is pleased to announce that Explorer Elementary (Harrisburg) and Platte-Geddes Elementary have been named 2021 National ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) Distinguished Schools. They will be honored at the National ESEA Conference to be held in February 2022.

“We are so proud of the staff and students at Explorer Elementary and Platte-Geddes Elementary,” said Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson. “Each state can only nominate two schools, so this is a prestigious honor. We commend all of their hard work to support students’ learning.”

Explorer Elementary was recognized for excellence in serving special populations of students (e.g. homeless, migrant, English learners, etc.), and Platte-Geddes Elementary was recognized for exceptional student performance and academic growth for two or more consecutive years.

“We are very proud to be honored as a National ESEA Distinguished School,” said Explorer Elementary Principal Douglas Eppard. “Achieving this honor for closing the achievement gap with our English learner students is an even greater distinction. We could not have obtained this award without the dedication of our parents, students, teachers, staff, and program directors working together to achieve this academic accomplishment for all students.”

“We have outstanding teachers who have spent countless hours preparing lessons that match grade-level expectations,” said Platte-Geddes Elementary Principal Jennifer Knecht. “Our teachers continuously use assessment data to find the specific skill areas where our students need assistance. We set high expectations. Our students, teachers, and parents deserve this prestigious award for their hard work and dedication to academic excellence. I am so proud of every teacher and student in our school.”

The National Association of ESEA State Program Administrators—formerly the National Title I Association—has been selecting examples of superior, federally funded school programs for national recognition through the National ESEA Distinguished Schools program (recently renamed from its predecessor, the National Title I Distinguished Schools program) since 1996.