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### **Ballard selected as 2022 South Dakota Teacher of the Year**

PIERRE, S.D. – Stephanie Ballard, a special education teacher at George S. Mickelson Middle School in Brookings, has been named the 2022 South Dakota Teacher of the Year. Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson made the announcement this evening at a banquet at the Drifters Event Center in Fort Pierre.

“The Teacher of the Year recognition is much more than an award,” said Secretary of Education Tiffany Sanderson. “Over the coming year, Stephanie will become South Dakota’s ‘teacher ambassador,’ advocating for the profession and for students. At the national level, she will network with colleagues, sharing her expertise and bringing back valuable insights to South Dakota.”

Ballard has taught in the Brookings School District since 2014, first at Camelot Intermediate School before moving to George S. Mickelson Middle School in 2016. She has served on a variety of school and district committees and is active with her local education association. She enjoys professional development and leadership opportunities and mentors new special education teachers in the district.

A statewide panel of educators selected Ballard from among five regional finalists. The other finalists were Kristi Desaulniers, Legacy Elementary (Tea); Barbara Nicholas, elementary music, Buchanan K-1 Center (Huron); Jenna Peters, 6-12 English language arts, Britton-Hecla School District; and Koreen Hammel, fifth grade, Hot Springs Elementary.

As recipient of the honor, Ballard receives prizes including a \$5,000 grant from the South Dakota Department of Education and a \$1,000 honorarium from the South Dakota Board of Regents to present a series of professional development seminars to aspiring teachers. Prize packages are made possible through the generosity of private businesses and organizations, including the South Dakota Retailers Association and the South Dakota Education Association.

In addition, Ballard will represent South Dakota as a candidate for the National Teacher of the Year award. The National Teacher of the Year Program began in 1952 and continues as the oldest, most prestigious national honors program that focuses public attention on excellence in teaching. The 2022 National Teacher of the Year will be announced during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., in the spring.

