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## Lutz selected as 2016 South Dakota Teacher of the Year

PIERRE, S.D. - Sarah Lutz, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher at Stanley County Elementary School in Fort Pierre, has been selected as the 2016 South Dakota Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made this evening at a banquet at the Cedar Shore Conference Center in Oacoma.

"Those who dedicate their careers to teaching often do so with little fanfare. With this award, we shine a much-deserved spotlight on these special people. I commend Sarah for achieving this honor. She will represent the profession well in coming months across our state," said South Dakota Secretary of Education Melody Schopp.



Sarah Lutz, South Dakota's 2016 Teacher of the Year (left), with Secretary of Education Melody Schopp

As a member of her school's leadership team, Lutz has led the development of math/literacy family nights to promote parent involvement. Lutz is an instructional team leader for grades 2-3 and has completed the South Dakota Counts teacher leadership program. She also serves as a volunteer coach for the Girls on the Run program.

A statewide panel of educators selected Lutz from among five regional finalists. The other finalists were Kim Davidson, Rosholt School District; Heidi Holforty, Huron School District; Shelly Mikkelson, Belle Fourche School District; and Kaye Wickard, Ipswich Public School District. Leslie Fything with the Tea Area School District was also a regional finalist, but because she was contemplating retirement was not eligible to compete for State Teacher of the Year.

As recipient of the honor, Lutz receives prizes including a \$5,000 cash award, a \$6,300 technology package from SMART Technologies 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.

In addition, Lutz 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 2016 National Teacher of the Year will be announced during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., in April.