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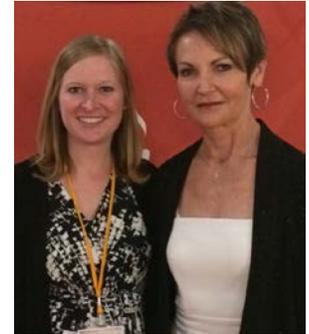
CONTACT: Mary Stadick Smith, (605) 773-7228, South Dakota Department of Education, mary.stadicksmith@state.sd.us or

Ruth Raveling, South Dakota Department of Education, (605) 773-2593, ruth.raveling@state.sd.us

Schaefer selected as 2018 South Dakota Teacher of the Year

PIERRE, S.D. – Rachel Schaefer, a kindergarten teacher at Elkton Elementary School, has been named the 2018 South Dakota Teacher of the Year. The announcement was made this evening at a banquet at the Best Western Ramkota in Rapid City.

“The Teacher of the Year award is all about celebrating teaching,” said Secretary of Education Dr. Melody Schopp. “Rachel has received this honor not only because of her great work in the kindergarten classroom, but also because she is a strong advocate for the profession as a whole.”



Schaefer has taught in the Elkton School District since 2015. She has also worked at the Boys & Girls Club of Brookings, where she served as an administrator and as a preschool/junior kindergarten teacher. Earlier in her career, at the Fishback Center for Early Childhood Education at South Dakota State University, she collaborated on a research project looking at the influence materials have on children’s learning. This research was published as her master’s thesis and later adapted into an article for Young Children magazine.

A statewide panel of educators selected Schaefer from among six regional finalists. The other finalists were Cara Biegler, science, Timber Lake Middle School; Caitlin Bordeaux, computer science and multimedia, St. Francis Indian High School; Jennifer Mudder, fifth grade, Tyndall Elementary; Jeremy Risty, social studies, Brandon Valley High School; and Jessica Zwaschka, chemistry, Spearfish High School.

As recipient of the honor, Schaefer receives prizes including a \$5,000 cash award from the West River Foundation 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 Amplify, Inner Explorer, SMART, the South Dakota Retailers Association and the South Dakota Education Association.

In addition, Schaefer 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 2018 National Teacher of the Year will be announced during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., in the spring.

