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### **Celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week and announcing Regional Teachers of the Year**

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Kristi Noem has proclaimed [May 6-10 Teacher Appreciation Week](#) in South Dakota.

“In South Dakota teachers, I see dedicated professionals pushing their students to achieve the highest standards, so that they will learn how to think, not what to think,” said Interim Secretary of Education Dr. Ben Jones. “We have all been impacted by great teachers. Please take time this week to thank a teacher for the important work they do.”

As part of this special week, the South Dakota Department of Education is pleased to announce the following individuals as South Dakota’s 2020 Regional Teachers of the Year:

- Region #1: Jean Gunderson, K-6 Title reading, Elkton Elementary School
- Region #2: Amanda Harris, fourth grade, Endeavor Elementary School (Harrisburg)
- Region #3: Dina Vander Wilt, kindergarten, L.B. Williams Elementary School (Mitchell)
- Region #4: Nicole Dallman, third grade, Mobridge-Pollock Upper Elementary School
- Region #5: Penny Shuster Louks, eighth grade English language arts, Belle Fourche Middle School

A statewide panel of educators will select one of these regional finalists to represent the state as the 2020 South Dakota Teacher of the Year. The 2020 South Dakota Teacher of the Year will be announced Oct. 10, 2019, at the Systems Change Conference in Oacoma. That individual will be South Dakota’s 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 2020 National Teacher of the Year will be announced during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., in spring 2020.

The Department of Education will be using the hashtag #ThankATeacher on social media throughout the week. Members of the public are invited to share a message of thanks for the teachers impacting students across the state and country.

**Editor’s Note:** Please consider contacting your local school(s) for potential stories about Teacher Appreciation Week celebrations in your community.