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### **Three South Dakota schools named National Blue Ribbon Schools**

Pierre, S.D. -- Three South Dakota schools have been identified as National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. The award recognizes schools for their excellence in overall academic performance or for their progress in closing the achievement gap among diverse groups of students.

The South Dakota Department of Education congratulated these schools on this achievement and their commitment to South Dakota students:

“Congratulations to South Dakota’s newest Blue Ribbon schools, their staff, students, and communities,” said Secretary of Education Joseph Graves. “They demonstrate what can be achieved when resourceful educators and engaged students put their values into action.”

The South Dakota schools named as National Blue Ribbon Schools are:

- Bridgewater-Emery Elementary, Bridgewater-Emery School District
- Fred Assam Elementary, Brandon Valley School District
- Castlewood High School, Castlewood School District

These schools serve as models of effective practices for other educators in South Dakota and schools throughout the nation. All three of the schools recognized in South Dakota are honored for their high student scores in English and mathematics.

Each school stands out for its unique approach to education. Bridgewater-Emery Elementary, for example, focuses on meaningful community engagement. Students have opportunities to visit senior centers, nearby Hutterite colonies, local businesses, and other points of interest. These experiences, combined with strong in-class instruction, create engaged, informed students.

Fred Assam Elementary’s Walk to Read process has improved literacy for students at every grade level. The process focuses on assessing each child’s reading level and providing the right reading instruction for their ability level. The school’s administration also emphasizes the importance of collaboration and planning time for teachers at the school.

Castlewood High School works to provide students with the encouragement to take rigorous classes that match their ability level. It’s a small school that keeps students well-rounded by providing high-quality academic, athletic, and performance opportunities, which are boosted by a supportive community.