

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Thursday, Sept. 28, 2023

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### **Hawkins selected as 2024 South Dakota Teacher of the Year**

MITCHELL, S.D. – George Hawkins, a social studies teacher at Jefferson High School in Sioux Falls, has been named the 2024 South Dakota Teacher of the Year. Secretary of Education Joseph Graves made the announcement at a banquet at the Highland Conference Center in Mitchell.

“George is the embodiment of excellence in teaching,” said Graves. “His ability to take what he has learned and experienced outside of the classroom, and incorporate that into lessons about history and government, is a gift to his students today.”

Hawkins began his 12<sup>th</sup> year of teaching this fall. He teaches American Experience, AP Government, and dual credit Government. His classes focus on project-based learning, which means he teaches by assigning history-related projects to his classes. The students work on projects and learn through that experience.

In a previously recorded video promoting the education profession, Hawkins explained the importance of building relationships with students and helping them to interact with one another. “Teaching is much more than content,” he said. “Teaching is developing those foundations. That’s really the bedrock of what’s going to create a good classroom.”

Hawkins’ pathway to the profession was a non-traditional one. He studied law and worked as a lawyer for several years before becoming a teacher.

As South Dakota Teacher of the Year, Hawkins receives prizes including a \$5,000 grant from the West River Foundation to use as he wishes, and a \$2,000 honorarium from the South Dakota Board of Regents to present a series of professional development seminars to aspiring teachers. Additional prizes are made possible through the generosity of the South Dakota Retailers Association and the South Dakota Education Association.

Hawkins will represent South Dakota as a candidate for the 2024 National Teacher of the Year award. The winner will be announced during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., next spring. 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.