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Four Schools Receive No-Cost Trip to Pierre to Learn Government, History

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota's capital city will be the classroom site for pupils from four South Dakota school districts in coming weeks as they spend a day in Pierre learning about state government and state history.

Through a partnership between the South Dakota State Historical Society, its nonprofit fundraising partner the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation and a grant from Xcel Energy, schools in southeastern South Dakota were provided with the opportunity to spend a day in Pierre at no cost to the school districts.

Students from participating schools will receive round-trip transportation to Pierre by bus, a tour of the Capitol and two educational sessions at the Cultural Heritage Center. Lunch will be provided as well. They also have the option of viewing the Legislature while it is in session.

"Some school districts do not have the funds to provide students with educational opportunities outside the classroom," said Foundation President Michael Lewis. "We are pleased to be able to provide students with an educational experience at no cost to the school district."

Every student in South Dakota should have the opportunity to tour the Capitol and to learn about the history of the state at the Cultural Heritage Center, said State Historical Society Director Jay D. Vogt.

"This grant from Xcel Energy makes it possible for school districts to learn first-hand about our state's government and history," Vogt said.

Staff members of the state archives and the state museum will provide educational sessions while the students are at the Cultural Heritage Center.

The schools involved and the dates they will be visiting Pierre are: Bridgewater-Emery, Feb. 5; Baltic, Feb. 6; Salem St. Mary's, Feb. 27; and Harrisburg North Middle School, March 4, 5 and 6.

This is the first year of the partnership between the State Historical Society, the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation and Xcel Energy.

"We hope to provide a similar or expanded program during the 2014-2015 school year," Lewis said.

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.