



FOR RELEASE
Sept. 9, 2010

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NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL RECOGNITION FOR 304 SCHOOLS

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan today recognized 304 schools as 2010 National Blue Ribbon Schools. Secretary Duncan was joined by Washington, D.C. Mayor Adrian M. Fenty, D.C. Public Schools Chancellor Michelle Rhee and George Washington University Provost Steven Lerman for the announcement at School Without Walls Senior High School, a 2010 Blue Ribbon School in Washington, D.C.

The schools – 254 public and 50 private – will be honored at an awards ceremony Nov. 15-16 in Washington, D.C. In the past 28 years, more than 6,000 of America's schools have received this coveted award.

“Our nation has a responsibility to help all children realize their full potential,” Duncan said. “Schools honored with the Blue Ribbon Schools award are committed to achievement and to ensuring that students learn and succeed. Their work reflects the conviction that every child has promise and must receive a quality education.”

The award honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools whose students achieve at very high levels or have made significant progress and helped close gaps in achievement especially among disadvantaged and minority students. Each year since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education has sought out schools where students attain and maintain high academic goals, including those that beat the odds.

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private schools based on one of two criteria:

1) Schools whose students, regardless of backgrounds, are high performing. These are schools ranked among the state's highest performing schools as measured by their performance on state assessments or in the case of private schools, that score at the highest performance level on tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested; and

2) Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that improve student performance to high levels as measured by the school's performance on state assessments or nationally-normed tests.

A total of 413 schools nationwide can be nominated, based on the number of K-12 students and the number of schools in each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The chief state school officer nominates public schools, and the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) submits private schools' nominations. The schools are invited by the secretary of education to submit an application for possible recognition as a Blue Ribbon School.

NOTE TO EDITORS: A list of the 2010 Blue Ribbon Schools is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/awards.html>.

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THE BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS PROGRAM RECOGNIZING EXCELLENT AMERICAN SCHOOLS

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools whose students achieve at very high levels or have made significant progress and helped close gaps in achievement, especially among disadvantaged and minority students. The program is part of a larger Department of Education effort to identify and disseminate knowledge about best school leadership and teaching practices.

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program sets a standard of excellence for all schools striving for the highest level of achievement. Each year since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education has sought out schools where students attain and maintain high academic goals, including those that beat the odds.

For many schools, attaining the Blue Ribbon School award and recognition is a realization of a long-held dream. There is much excitement in the school community and the local media eagerly profiles schools that have attained the recognition. The schools are honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, DC, where each Blue Ribbon School receives a plaque and flag to signify its Blue Ribbon School status. These schools serve as models for other schools throughout the nation and details of their achievements are shared on the U.S. Department of Education's website.

I. Background

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program dates back to 1982, when then Secretary of Education, Terrel Bell commissioned a study of American education. The report, called *A Nation at Risk*, described a "rising tide" of mediocre schools that threatened the nation's future. In part, it galvanized the extraordinary energy that has been devoted to educational research and school reform over the last quarter century.

Secretary Bell created the Blue Ribbon Schools Award to bring the best U.S. schools to public attention and to recognize those schools whose students thrived and excelled. Working with the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Bell launched the Blue Ribbon Schools and the National Distinguished Principals Programs. Both highlighted outstanding models of American schools and school leadership.

Since then, the U. S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools Program has honored many of America's most successful schools. The Blue Ribbon Schools Program sets a high standard that should be a goal for all improving schools and schools striving for high levels of achievement. A Blue Ribbon School flag waving overhead has become a mark of excellence, a symbol of quality recognized by everyone from parents to policy-makers in thousands of communities.

II. Nomination Process

For public schools, the Secretary of Education invites Chief State School Officers (CSSOs) including the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), to nominate schools that meet the criteria for

recognition. For private schools, the Secretary invites the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) to nominate private schools that also meet the criteria for recognition.

In submitting the list of nominated schools, the CSSO of each state, DoDEA, and BIA, must certify that the nominated schools meet the minimum requirements established by the Department and describe any other criteria used to nominate the schools. The nomination criteria, including assessments, must pertain equally to all nominated schools. States must rely on their state assessment systems to identify schools for submission to the Secretary and CAPE relies on nationally-normed tests. Each state is assigned a number of possible applicants based on the number of K-12 students and the number of schools in the state. The number of possible state applicants ranges from a minimum of 3 schools to a maximum of 35. DoDEA and BIA may nominate one school each and CAPE may nominate up to 50 private schools. A total of 413 schools can be nominated for the award.

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program accepts both public and private elementary and secondary schools that meet one of two criteria:

- *High performing schools:* Schools whose students, regardless of backgrounds are high performing. These are schools ranked among the state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments in both reading (English language arts) and mathematics or that score at the highest performance level on tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested.
- *Improving schools:* Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that have reduced the achievement gap by improving student performance to high levels in reading (English language arts) and mathematics on state assessments or tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested.

At least one-third of the schools nominated by each state must have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the current school year, whether these schools are high performing or show improvement to high levels. States may not nominate schools that have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the last two years and schools must also make AYP in the year of their nomination.

III. Criteria for High Performing Schools

Public Schools:

- Regardless of the school's percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the school is high performing. "*High performing*" means that the achievement of the school's students in the latest year tested places the school in the top 10 percent of schools in the state on state assessments of reading (or English language arts) and mathematics. Disaggregated results for student subgroups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, must be similar to the levels of all students tested.

- The school must have made AYP as defined by the state for the past two years and also make AYP in the year it receives the award.

Private Schools:

- Regardless of the school's demographics or percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the school is high performing. "*High performing*" means that the achievement of the school's students in the most recent year tested places the school among the highest performing schools in the nation in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics as measured by a nationally normed test or among the highest in its state as measured by a state test. If a private school administers both state test and nationally normed tests, the school must be among the highest in both. Disaggregated results for student groups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, must be similar to the results for all students tested.

IV. Criteria for Improving Schools:

Public Schools:

- At least 40 percent of the nominated school's students are from disadvantaged backgrounds and the achievement of its students has improved to high levels. "*Improving to high levels*" is defined by the CSSO of each state but, at a minimum means (a) the school has demonstrated a positive trend in test results from the earliest to the most recent year tested, (b) in the most recent year tested, the achievement of the school's students places the school in the top 40 percent of schools in the state on state assessments of reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and (c) disaggregated results for student subgroups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds must show improvement similar to that of all students.
- The school must have made AYP as defined by the state for the past two years and also make AYP in the year it receives the award.

Private Schools:

- Schools with at least 40 percent of the student body from disadvantaged backgrounds, and have improved student performance in reading (English language arts) and mathematics to high levels. "*Improving to high levels*" means: (a) the school has demonstrated a positive trend in test results from the earliest to the most recent year tested, (b) in the most recent year tested, the achievement of the school's students places the school in the top 40 percent of schools in the nation in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics as measured by nationally normed assessments and (c) disaggregated results for student subgroups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, also must show improvement similar to that of all students. If a private school administers both state tests and nationally normed tests, the school must be in the top 40 percent in both.

V. Other requirements for any school to be able to qualify:

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12.

(Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state’s Adequate Yearly Progress requirement for the 2009-2010 school year. AYP must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2004.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, or 2009.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

VI. 2009-2010 Blue Ribbon Schools Program Timeline and Process:

September 2009: The Secretary of Education invited nomination from Chief State School Officers (CSSOs), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), and the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) for the 2010 Blue Ribbon School award.

- December 4: CSSOs, BIE, and DoDEA submitted nominated public schools to the U. S. Department of Education.
- December 9: The Department of Education invited schools nominated by the CSSOs to apply for recognition as Blue Ribbon Schools.
- January 8, 2010: CAPE's review panel selected private school nominees for recognition as Blue Ribbon Schools.
- February 26, 2010** Completed public and private school (from CAPE) applications submitted to the Department.
- March 8-12: Blue Ribbon School applications were reviewed for completeness and accuracy.
- April 24-28: Blue Ribbon School applications were reviewed for compliances with eligibility criteria.
- August 31: CSSOs certified that nominated public schools had met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2010.
- September 9: U. S. Secretary of Education announces 2010 National Blue Ribbon Schools at School without Walls Senior High School in Washington, DC.
- November 15-16: Two representatives from each school, the principal and a teacher, will attend the recognition ceremony in Washington, DC.

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2010 NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

September 9, 2010

“Blue Ribbon Schools are models of improved student achievement from which others can take inspiration.”

-- U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan

To give national attention and recognition to schools whose students have achieved and attained higher levels of performance and shown improvements in student achievement especially among disadvantaged and minority students. Each year since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education has sought out schools where students attain and maintain high academic goals, including those that beat the odds. The U.S. Department of Education directs the **Blue Ribbon Schools** program.

The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools based on one of two criteria:

- High performing: These are schools, whose students, regardless of backgrounds, are high performing. They are ranked among the state’s highest performing schools as measured by their performance on state assessments or in the case of private schools, that score at the highest performance level on tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested; and
- Improving Schools: These are schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that improve student performance to high levels as measured by the school’s performance on state assessments or nationally-normed tests.

304 public and private schools achieved this status, out of more than 132,000 public and private schools in the nation.

Blue Ribbon Schools are committed to achievement and to ensuring that students learn and succeed. Their work reflects the conviction that every child has promise and must receive a quality education.

Applying and Qualifying For Blue Ribbon School Status

- The Chief State School Officer nominates schools for the Blue Ribbon Schools award. Each state may nominate a set number of public schools based on the number of schools and students in the state. The Council for American Private Education (CAPE) nominates 50 private schools.
- Once nominated, a school must fill out a brief application to be considered for the award. The application process focuses on academic results and research based instructional programs in order to identify educational practices that are successful at closing the achievement gap.
- Schools must also achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for the past two years, including the award year, in order to receive the award.

A list of 2010 Blue Ribbon Schools is available at www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/2010/index.html. For more information about the program, including each school’s application, visit www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html.