



Press Room

Press Releases

- Latest

▶ 2009

- Archive

Speeches

Photos

Video

Events

Senior Staff

Newsletters

Federal Register

New at ED.gov

- About ED
- Budget & Performance
- Press Room
- Publications
- Teaching Resources

- FAQs
- Contact
- Help
- Jobs at ED
- Online Services
- Recursos en español
- State Information
- Web Survey

PRESS RELEASES

**Education Secretary Arne Duncan Designates 314 Schools as 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools**

**FOR RELEASE:**

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U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan today announced 314 schools as 2009 National Blue Ribbon Schools. Secretary Duncan was joined by Maryland State Superintendent Dr. Nancy S. Grasmick, Montgomery County Board of Education President Shirley Brandman, and Montgomery County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Jerry Weast for the announcement this morning at Highland Elementary School, a 2009 Blue Ribbon School in Silver Spring, Md.

The schools – 264 public and 50 private – will be honored at an awards ceremony on November 3 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC. For the past 27 years, more than 6,150 of America's schools have received this coveted award.

"These Blue Ribbon Schools have shown that all children can learn with appropriate supports," Duncan said. "They are producing outstanding results for their students. Some have shown dramatic improvements in places where students are overcoming the challenges of poverty, and others serve as examples of consistent excellence that can be a resource for other schools. They are places where improved teaching and learning benefits every student, and where students are challenged to meet high expectations with the active support of teachers, parents and the community."

The award honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools that are either academically superior, or have made dramatic gains in student achievement and helped close gaps in achievement among minority and disadvantaged students. Each year since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education has sought out schools where students attain and maintain high academic goals. Using standards of excellence, as evidenced by student achievement measures and the characteristics known from research to exemplify school quality, the Department celebrates schools, 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 background, achieve in the top 10 percent of their state on state tests or in the case of private schools in the top 10 percent of the nation on nationally-normed tests; and 2) Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that demonstrate dramatic improvement of student performance to high levels on state tests or nationally-normed tests.

In addition, public schools must meet Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, in reading (language arts) and mathematics. Each state -- not the federal government -- sets its own academic standards and benchmark goals.

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 (CSSO) 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 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/awards.html>.

###

[Top](#)

» [Back to September 2009](#)

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- Federal Student Aid
- Find funding by

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- ED.gov recovery
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- Press Releases
- Speeches

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- FOIA

- Educational resources
- Diploma mills, accreditation
- Facts and figures
- Research
- More

- eligibility
- Doing business with the Department of Education
- Forecast of funding opportunities
- Open Contract Solicitations

**Research & Statistics**

- Institute of Education Sciences
- Education Statistics
- Evaluation Reports
- Nation's Report Card
- Doing What Works

- plan
- Recent policy guidance
- Significant guidance documents
- Policy by Program
- NCLB Policy Letters
- No Child Left Behind

**Programs**

- By Subject
- By Title
- By CFDA#
- Search

- Media Advisories
- Secretary's Schedule
- Video
- Newsletters

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- ED Offices
- Senior Staff
- Political Appointees
- Contacts
- Budget
- Annual Reports and Plans
- Jobs at ED
- Inspector General
- No FEAR Act Data

- Privacy
- Security
- Information Quality
- Help

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- ExpectMore.gov
- GovBenefits.gov