

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS

FOR RELEASE  
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St. Cecilia School  
Pre-K-4 to Grade 5  
296 Students

**EDUCATION SECRETARY ARNE DUNCAN  
DESIGNATES 314 SCHOOLS AS 2009 BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS  
ST. CECILIA SCHOOL IS A BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE**

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

The schools – 264 public and 50 private were 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. Miss Belford and Dr. Borchetta represented St. Cecilia School.

"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 Ribbons 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>.