



WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

Westwood Elementary School Receives National Honor *Downey Elementary Named National Blue Ribbon School*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sept. 26, 2019 – Westwood, MA – The U.S. Department of Education today named Westwood’s Downey Elementary School a [National Blue Ribbon School](#) for 2019, joining 361 other schools from around the nation. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos made the announcement this afternoon. Schools are awarded a National Blue Ribbon based on overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

“It is an honor to be named as a National Blue Ribbon School,” said Deb Gallagher, Downey Elementary School’s principal. “This recognition represents the hard work of the Downey staff who are passionate about teaching and learning. It also represents the strong, vibrant, and positive community culture we have established in our school. We are all fortunate to work in a community where parents, central office administration, and the school committee support the work we do and provide the resources that are needed to meet the needs of every student.”

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools where students achieve very high learning standards or are making notable improvements in closing the achievement gap.

“We’re so proud of the faculty, staff, and students at Downey and thrilled that their efforts, and Mrs. Gallagher’s leadership, have been recognized,” said Westwood Public Schools Superintendent Emily Parks. “Downey School has a wonderful, welcoming culture focused on the success of all kids and the Blue Ribbon designation affirms it.”

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program was established in 1982, and has presented more than 8,500 schools across the country this coveted award. On November 14 and 15, the Department of Education will celebrate all 2019 honorees at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. Westwood will also celebrate the award with a PTO-sponsored family night and a reception for teachers and staff.

“We recognize and honor your important work in preparing students for successful careers and meaningful lives,” Secretary DeVos said in a video message to the honorees. “As a National Blue Ribbon School, your school demonstrates what is possible when committed educators hold all students and staff to high standards and create vibrant, innovative cultures of teaching and learning.”

The Department recognizes all schools in one of two performance categories, based on all student scores, student subgroup scores and graduation rates:

1. **Exemplary High Performing Schools** are among their state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests.
2. **Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools** are among their state's highest performing schools in closing achievement gaps between a school's student groups and all students.

Up to 420 schools may be nominated each year. The Department invites National Blue Ribbon School nominations from the top education official in all states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, the Department of Defense Education Activity and the Bureau of Indian Education. Private schools are nominated by The Council for American Private Education (CAPE).

Media Contact:

Matt Ellis

matt@ellisstrategies.com | 617.278.6560

Note to Editors: Photographs and brief descriptions of the 2019 National Blue Ribbon Schools are available at <https://www.ed.gov/nationalblueribbonschools>.

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