
PRESS RELEASE

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Western High School Wins National Blue Ribbon Honor; Brings City Schools Count to Six

(Baltimore, MD) — U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the 2009 National Blue Ribbon Schools today, and among them is Baltimore City Public Schools' own Western High School. Western is one of approximately 300 public and private schools across the country being honored for academic excellence and major student achievement gains this year. Western's award brings to six the total number of Baltimore City public schools to receive the national distinction since its inception in 1982—three of them in the last three years.

“This award is a reflection of an entire school community's tremendous efforts and success over time. My sincere congratulations go out to Principal Eleanor Matthews and her extraordinary staff and students,” said City Schools CEO Andrés A. Alonso. “Western's place among the nation's top schools is also the latest evidence of our students' great potential and the growing range of rich academic opportunities for students at our schools.”

“What an honor to be named a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence! This award along with the Maryland Blue Ribbon School of Excellence recognizes and validates the great work of Western's students, staff, parents, and community, and it acknowledges Western's place among the top schools in our nation,” said Ms. Matthews.

The U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Program honors public and private schools that demonstrate sustained academic excellence or dramatic student achievement gains among disadvantaged students. To date, six Baltimore City public schools have received the honor: Western, Baltimore School for the Arts, Patapsco Elementary School, Baltimore City College, George Washington Elementary School and Cecil Elementary School. To qualify, schools must first be recognized as Blue Ribbon schools at the state level.

Maryland Blue Ribbon Schools must either fall within the top 10 percent of all Maryland schools in their school category (elementary, middle, high) based on at least three years of state assessment data, or they must show dramatic student achievement gains (also based on at least three years of state assessment data) with a student population where at least 40 percent of students qualify for free and reduced-priced meals. Schools in this latter category must also fall within the top 40 percent of all Maryland schools in their school category.

Western was named a Maryland Blue Ribbon School in December 2008, and was cited at the time by the Maryland State Department of Education for its high pass rates on the state High School Assessment (HSA) in both reading (99 percent) and math (98 percent), and for the fact that all Western graduates won admission to four year colleges and universities. Of Western's students, 44 percent are economically disadvantaged.

Western, the oldest all-girls public high school in the country, also made *U.S. News & World Report's* 2008 annual America's Best High Schools list last year.