



Madison, IN - Deputy Elementary School recognized as a 2021 National Blue Ribbon School.

In a press release from the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona recognized 325 schools as [National Blue Ribbon Schools](#). The recognition is based on a school's overall academic performance or progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.



An excerpt from the U.S. Department of Education's release:

"This year's cohort of honorees demonstrates what is possible when committed educators and school leaders create vibrant, welcoming, and affirming school cultures where rich teaching and learning can flourish," said Secretary Cardona. "I commend this school and all our Blue Ribbon honorees for working to keep students healthy and safe while meeting their academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. In the face of unprecedented circumstances, you found creative ways to engage, care for,

protect, and teach our children. Blue Ribbon Schools have so much to offer and can serve as a model for other schools and communities so that we can truly build back better."

The coveted National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content. Now in its 39th year, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has bestowed approximately 10,000 awards to more than 9,000 schools.

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

- **Exemplary High-Performing Schools** are among their state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments or nationally normed tests.
- **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.

Deputy Elementary School was recognized as an *Exemplary Achievement Gap-Closing School* for their work with students to close the achievement gap. "Our teachers work each day to meet students where they are, emotionally, academically, socially, and physically," shared Deputy Principal Janet McCreary. "They know the importance of looking at students as a whole, not just from one angle. Everything we accomplish at Deputy Elementary is done together. Teachers and staff work together to teach and support students, their families, and each other. It is truly a family atmosphere."

"To be recognized with this award is an incredible honor," shared Superintendent Dr. Jeff Studebaker. "This is the highest achievement a school can receive." Academic gap-closing occurs when students, within a specific cohort, are identified as low(er)-performing based on academic achievement data points and that gap is closed (improvement seen) on the same data points year after year. "Data drives our instruction, but the teachers and staff hearts provide the environment in which true learning can take place," continued McCreary. "Students feel safe and loved by the adults in our building." Lori Palmer, Special Education teacher, agreed "our staff is a family and we care for the kids like they are our own children."

In order to be considered for this award, a school must be nominated by the state department of education. "All of our academic data filters through the IDOE," continued Studebaker. "The data is reviewed year after year and can be attributed to a specific cohort of students. That continual improvement of academic performance made Deputy stand out among the nation's schools. This is truly a remarkable achievement and the fact that it is based upon student academic achievement and growth make it that much more incredibly special."

The nomination was received from the federal department of education by the school on February 5, 2021. Once identified, the school entered a lengthy application process to determine/verify academic practices, instructional delivery methods, data collection and follow-up, and other points of interest to confirm they met all of the necessary requirements as determined by the Indiana Department of Education. "The application process provided us the opportunity to reflect on current and past practices," shared McCreary. "That type of specific reflection allows us to grow and improve on our practices, which benefits not only current students but future students." One critical piece of this success is alignment. "Our staff buys into the vertical alignment of ALL school practices, which allows students a continuous, smooth transition to learning," shared Kathy Stoner, first-grade teacher and former MCS Teacher of the Year.

Deputy Elementary School (DES) curriculum is aligned vertically to ensure that we prepare our students for higher learning. As a staff, we regularly collaborate and agree upon what strategies, resources, and content will be taught based on what is available and researched based. We then implement our decisions PK through 4th grade.

Students will hold a school-wide celebration on campus later today when they watch Secretary Cardona make the official (recorded) announcement of the national winners. Dr. Jeff Studebaker will recognize the students and staff with a local announcement and share what this means for our school, families, and community. You can join in the celebration via Facebook Live from the Deputy Elementary School - MCS page.

To watch the video of Tuesday's announcement, please visit one of the links below after 11:00 a.m. EST on Wednesday, September 22, 2021:

<https://ed.gov/nationalblueribbonschools>

<https://nationalblueribbonschools.ed.gov>

<https://twitter.com/NatlBlueRibbon>

<https://twitter.com/usedgov>

<https://www.facebook.com/nationalblueribbonschools>

There were seven schools in the state of Indiana recognized with this award, all were elementary schools.

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