



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Department of Education

November 15, 2013

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: United States Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

The purpose of this memorandum is to announce an opportunity for recognition of certain schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia through the United States Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon Schools Program (Blue Ribbons Program). The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) encourages school divisions to nominate eligible schools according to the criteria.

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors elementary and secondary schools whose students achieve at very high levels or schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap. This program sets a standard of excellence for all schools striving for the highest level of achievement. Schools are eligible for National Blue Ribbon recognition if they meet either one of two criteria:

1. *Exemplary High Performing Schools.* "High performing" is defined by the Chief State School Officers (CSSOs) of each state, but at a minimum means: (a) that the performance for all students in both reading and mathematics must be in the top 15 percent of all schools in the state in the most recent year tested, (b) that the performance of students in both reading and mathematics in each subgroup must be in the top 40 percent of all schools in the state in the most recent year tested based on the performance of their own subgroup at the state level, and (c) that the graduation rate of nominated high schools must be in the top 15 percent of all high schools in the state; or
2. *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools.* "Achievement gap closing" is defined by the CSSO of each state, but at a minimum means: (a) that the school must be in the top 15 percent of all schools in the state for both reading and mathematics based on progress in closing achievement gaps between the school's subgroups and the state's all-students group over a five-year period, (b) that the performance of students in the all-student group in the school should not have declined over the same period relative to the state's all-student group in both reading and mathematics, (c) that the performance of students in both reading and mathematics in all subgroups in the school must be in the top 40 percent of all schools in the state in the most recent year tested based on the performance of their respective subgroup at the state level, and (d) that the graduation rates of students in all subgroups in a high school must be in the top 40 percent of all high schools in the state based on the graduation rates of their respective subgroups at the state level.

Additional information is available on the U. S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon School Program Web site at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html>.

If you would like the VDOE to consider a school from your division as a 2014 National Blue Ribbon nominee from Virginia, please send an e-mail indicating the name of the school to [Selena.McBride@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Selena.McBride@doe.virginia.gov) by

Friday, November 29, 2013. Please include the wording "National Blue Ribbon Schools" in the subject of the e-mail. The VDOE will select nominees based on the eligibility criteria required by the United States Department of Education. Please note also that priority selection of "finalist" schools by the department will be based on those schools or school divisions that have not been nominated in the past. The department's goal is to ensure equity throughout the state whenever possible.

For questions regarding the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, please contact Selena McBride, grants and reports manager, at (804) 371-4989 or by e-mail to [Selena.McBride@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Selena.McBride@doe.virginia.gov), or Dr. Susan Fitzpatrick, grants and reports manager, at (804) 225-2897 or by e-mail to [Susan.Fitzpatrick@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Susan.Fitzpatrick@doe.virginia.gov).

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