



Harford County Public Schools

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hickory Elementary named 2008 National Blue Ribbon School

U.S. Department of Education recognizes six Maryland schools for achievement, improvement

Harford's Hickory Elementary School was selected as a 2008 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education for students achieving at very high levels. The announcement made by Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, cited only six Maryland schools and 320 schools nationally to receive the distinguished honor.

Each year, the U.S. Department of Education conducts a nationwide search for 'Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence.' In order to facilitate that process, they first look to the state level where State Departments of Education nominate schools whose students demonstrated excellence in 'No Child Left Behind' (NCLB) sanctioned standardized tests. Additionally, the school must fall in the top 10 percent of all schools in the state on test scores in both reading and math for the past three years.

"We are extremely proud of our students for this achievement and equally as proud of our staff for their dedication to the success of our school," said Mrs. Jeanette Jennings, principal of Hickory Elementary School, in her first year of leadership at the school following the retirement of Mrs. Gail Connolly last year. "Mrs. Connolly set forth innovative and forward-thinking initiatives in order to elevate this school community to the highest level of achievement and we intend to continue those successful programs."

Better than 90 percent of Hickory Elementary students met standards in the 2007 MSA reading exam. The school was also recognized for its success in closing the achievement gap, African-American students outpacing the majority group in some areas of the annual test. In 2007, Hickory achieved 94 percent of its fifth graders scoring at a proficient level or higher in reading and 96 percent in mathematics, and met all of its Annual Measurable Objectives under the NCLB program.

"Maryland's Blue Ribbon Schools serve as examples for our state and for the rest of the nation," said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. "They exemplify high levels of achievement or dramatic improvement among economically disadvantaged students."

Hickory Elementary is the first Harford County Public School elementary national Blue Ribbon School and the first elementary Maryland Blue Ribbon School since Jarrettsville Elementary received the designation in 1992. Other HCPS Blue Ribbon Schools have been Bel Air Middle -- Maryland and National -- 2000; Joppatowne High -- Maryland -- 2000; North Harford Middle -- Maryland and National -- 1996; and Havre de Grace High -- Maryland and National -- 1990.

In addition to their academic successes, Hickory Elementary serves as a valued partner in the community, giving of their time to volunteer for various organizations. Facilitating an award-winning recycling program,

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winning first place in the Salvation Army Canned Food Drive, fundraising for Anna's House, a temporary shelter for women and children, and for the Harford Fuel Fund are just a few examples of the school's community service endeavors.

"It is the outstanding collaborative effort of the students, teachers, parents, administrators and community that makes Hickory Elementary School shine," commented Harford Superintendent Jacqueline C. Haas. "Hickory Elementary continues to meet the educational needs of all students and serves as an outstanding example of public education at its best."

Harford's Hickory Elementary joins six other Maryland schools nominated for this honor including: Cresaptown Elementary, Allegany County; Broadneck Elementary, Anne Arundel County; Cecil Elementary, Baltimore City; Piney Ridge Elementary, Carroll County; and Hickory Elementary, Washington County.

In addition to being honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC, where each school receives a plaque and flag signifying their "Blue Ribbon" status, these schools will serve as models for other schools throughout the nation.

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