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## U.S. Department of Education



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# Eligibility and Performance Award Criteria

**Eligibility for Public Schools:** The Department invites Chief State School Officers (CSSOs) for all states and the District of Columbia, the territories, the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) to nominate schools for recognition as National Blue Ribbon Schools. In submitting nominated schools, the CSSO of each state and these entities must certify that the nominated schools meet the minimum requirements established by the Department for nomination. As described below, states and nominating entities must rely on their accountability and assessment systems to identify schools for submission to the Secretary. Each state's nomination criteria must pertain equally to all schools nominated by the state.

**Performance Award Criteria for Public Schools:** Public schools nominated for the National Blue Ribbon Schools award must meet one of two eligibility criteria:

1. *Exemplary High Performing Schools:* "High performing" is defined by the CSSO of each state, but at a minimum means:
  - a. The school must be in the top 15 percent of all schools in the state when schools are ranked on
    - i. the performance of all students who participated in the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, **or**
    - ii. a composite index that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas and/or other student performance measures, such as attendance or graduation rates.
  - b. For each of the school's subgroups, the school must be in the top 40 percent of all schools in the state when schools are ranked on:
    - i. the performance of all students in the subgroup who participated in the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, **or**
    - ii. a composite index that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas and/or other student performance measures, such as attendance or graduation rates for high schools.
  - c. For high schools, the school must be in the top 15 percent of all high schools in the state when high schools are ranked on the most recently available graduation rate.

2. *Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing Schools*: "Achievement gap closing" is defined by the CSSO of each state, but at a minimum means:

- a. For each of the school's subgroups, the school must be in the top 15 percent of all schools in the state when schools are ranked on the school's progress in closing the gap between the performance of the school's subgroup and the state's all-students group over the past five years, comparing the most recent year to the earliest of the five years, on
  - i. the state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, *or*
  - ii. a composite index that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas and/or other student performance measures, such as attendance or graduation rates.
- b. For each of the school's subgroups, the school must be in the top 40 percent of all schools in the state when schools are ranked on:
  - i. the performance of all students in the subgroup who participated in the most recently administered state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, *or*
  - ii. a composite index that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas and/or other student performance measures, such as attendance or graduation rates.
- c. For high schools, the school must be in the top 40 percent of all high schools in the state when high schools are ranked on the most recently available graduation rate for each subgroup.
- d. The change in the performance of all students in the school over the past five years, comparing the most recent year to the earliest of the five years, must not be less than the change in the performance of all students in the state on:
  - i. the state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, *or*
  - ii. a composite index that includes these assessment results and may also include assessment results in other subject areas or other student performance measures, such as attendance or graduation rates.

In addition to meeting the above performance criteria, a nominated school must have at least 100 students enrolled and have assessment data for at least 10 students in each tested grade for both reading (or English language arts) and mathematics. States with a large percentage of schools with fewer than 100 students enrolled may include up to a similar percentage of these schools in their nominations. However, each school must have assessment data for at least 10 students in each tested grade for both reading (or English language arts) and mathematics.

One-third of the public schools nominated by each state must have enrollments that include at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination. In order to meet all eligibility requirements, nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2017.

**Eligibility for Non-Public Schools:** The Department invites the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) to nominate schools that meet the criteria for recognition. Non-public schools interested in being nominated should contact CAPE directly at [www.capenet.org/brs.html](http://www.capenet.org/brs.html) (<http://www.capenet.org/brs.html>). In submitting nominated schools, CAPE must certify that the schools meet the minimum requirements

established by the Department and describe any other criteria used to nominate the non-public schools.


**Performance Criteria for Non-Public Schools:** Non-public schools nominated for the National Blue Ribbon Schools award must meet the following eligibility criteria:

**1. Exemplary High Performing Schools:** *"High performing"* means:

- a. That the achievement of the school's students in the most recent year tested places the school in the top 15 percent in the nation in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics as measured by a nationally normed test or in the top 15 percent of its state as measured by a state test. If a non-public school administers both state tests and nationally normed tests, the school must be in the top 15 percent in both.
- b. Disaggregated results for student groups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, must be similar to the results for all students tested.
- c. The graduation rate for non-public high schools must be 95% or higher in the most recent year.

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