



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

January 8, 2003



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board Members

FROM: Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Chairman

SUBJECT: Report on the Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools Program

Since 1982, the Michigan Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools Program has celebrated many of Michigan's most successful schools. The purpose of the program is threefold:

- (1) to identify and give public recognition to outstanding public and private schools that achieve to high academic standards or have shown significant academic improvement over five years;
- (2) to make available a comprehensive framework of key criteria for school effectiveness that can serve as a basis for participatory self-assessment and planning in schools; and
- (3) to facilitate communication and sharing of best practices within and among schools based on a common understanding of criteria related to success.

The program has become a school improvement strategy and Blue Ribbon Schools model excellence and equity. They exhibit a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students. The school's success in furthering the intellectual, social, moral, and physical growth of all its students, including students with disabilities and limited English proficient students, is a basic consideration underlying the criteria. In seeking successful schools, the program welcomes both schools that have demonstrated sustained success in achieving these values and schools that have demonstrated significant progress while overcoming serious obstacles.

In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education eliminated the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program. In its place was created the No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools Program. The NCLB–BRS program is focused entirely on test scores. The Michigan State Board of Education adopted a resolution on March 14, 2002 (attached), encouraging the U.S. Department of Education to continue the previous program and resolving that the State Board of Education would maintain the existing Blue Ribbon Exemplary School Program in Michigan. While maintaining the existing Michigan program, the criteria have been expanded to incorporate facets of *Education YES!* and the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) aspect of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. However, with the demise of the previous federal program upon which the Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School Program is based, the federal recognition and award aspect of the program was discontinued.

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Attachment B provides an excerpt from the nomination information for the 2003-2004 Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools Program for secondary level schools, including a description of the program and eligibility criteria, the general framework, and the application timeline.

State of Michigan
State Board of Education

RESOLUTION

NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON RECOGNITION PROGRAM
MARCH 2002

WHEREAS, since 1982, the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan State Board of Education have participated in the National Blue Ribbon Recognition Program; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Schools Program identifies and recognizes outstanding public schools across the state that provide students a world-class education; and

WHEREAS, the program makes research-based effectiveness criteria available to all schools so that they can assess themselves and plan school improvements that are vital to the continued success of students, staff members, and the community which the school serves; and

WHEREAS, the Blue Ribbon Schools Program encourages school staff, both within and among themselves, to share information about best practices based on a common understanding of criteria related to educational success; and

WHEREAS, since the program's inception in Michigan, more than 350 Michigan schools have been honored as models of excellence and equity; and

WHEREAS, Blue Ribbon Schools consistently demonstrate sustained success in achieving these values as well as overcoming obstacles and can provide evidence of five years of improved and/or sustained student achievement; and

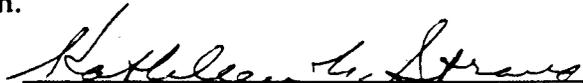
WHEREAS, the precepts of the Blue Ribbon Schools program are truly mirrored in the State Board of Education's strategic goal of lifting up all schools, with an emphasis on improving achievement levels in chronically underperforming schools; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Michigan State Board of Education supports the National Blue Ribbon Schools Recognition Program, and encourages local school districts and community leaders to appropriately recognize that quality schools, as exemplified in the Blue Ribbon Schools Program, are vital to the health of our communities; and, be it further

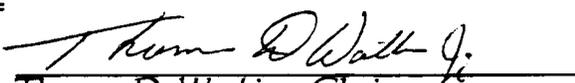
RESOLVED, That the Michigan State Board of Education encourages the United States Department of Education to continue the National Blue Ribbon Recognition Program, and, be it finally

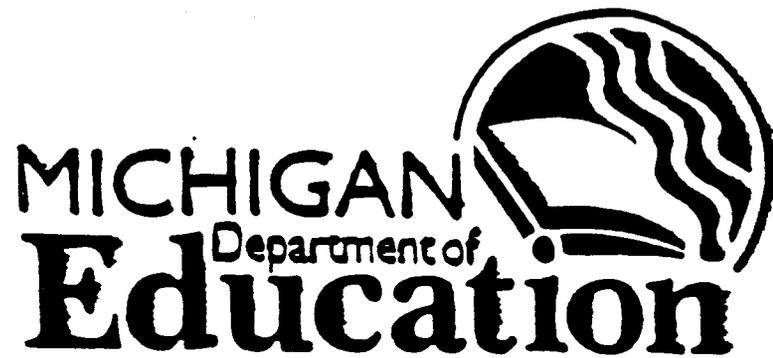
RESOLVED, That if the United States Department of Education does not continue the National Blue Ribbon Recognition Program, that the State Board of Education will maintain the Blue Ribbon Recognition Program in Michigan.




Kathleen N. Straus, President

Adopted March 14, 2002


Thomas D. Watkins, Chairman



2003-2004 Michigan Blue Ribbon
Exemplary Schools Program

Middle School and High School

Nomination Information

Presented to the
State Board of Education
January 23, 2003

INTRODUCTION

Since 1982, the Michigan Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools Program has celebrated many of Michigan's most successful schools. A Blue Ribbon flag waving overhead has become a trademark of excellence, a symbol of quality recognized by everyone from parents to policy-makers in thousands of communities. The Department invites school communities to use this nomination package to reflect on the quality and effectiveness of their programs. The experience of answering the questions and describing a school in terms of the Blue Ribbon criteria could open the door to statewide recognition. All schools will find that the Blue Ribbon criteria can be useful for ongoing school improvement efforts, even if recognition is not the immediate goal. The criteria provide a comprehensive framework for assessing school quality in all of its dimensions.

Program Purpose

The purpose of the Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools Program is threefold:

- (1) to identify and give public recognition to outstanding public and private schools that achieve to high academic standards or have shown significant academic improvement over five years;
- (2) to make available a comprehensive framework of key criteria for school effectiveness that can serve as a basis for participatory self-assessment and planning in schools; and
- (3) to facilitate communication and sharing of best practices within and among schools based on a common understanding of criteria related to success.

The program has become a school improvement strategy and Blue Ribbon Schools model excellence and equity. They exhibit a strong commitment to educational excellence for all students. The school's success in furthering the intellectual, social, moral, and physical growth of all its students, including students with disabilities and limited English proficient students, is a basic consideration underlying the criteria. In seeking successful schools, the program welcomes both schools that have demonstrated sustained success in achieving these values and schools that have demonstrated significant progress while overcoming serious obstacles.

Blue Ribbon Schools offer instructional programs that meet the highest academic standards, have supportive and learning-centered school environments, and demonstrate student outcome results that are significantly above average or have improved over time. The quality of each school will be judged against the Blue Ribbon Schools criteria in the context of how effectively it has defined and is meeting its own goals and how well it serves students, their families, and the local community. Additionally, for a school to be judged worthy of recognition, it must show significant progress in meeting the state's education goals. The conceptual basis for the program criteria is based on current research, state education reform goals, and the expert opinions of practitioners nationwide.

Elementary and secondary schools (middle, junior high, and high schools) are eligible to participate in alternate years. Once a school's eligibility to participate has been determined, information provided by a school in response to the program criteria will guide the Review Panel's analysis regarding the school's possible designation as a Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School.

PROGRAM CRITERIA

Eligible Schools

1. Only middle, junior high, and senior high schools are eligible for the 2003-2004 Blue Ribbon Schools Program. If the highest grade in the school is grade six, regardless of its name, the school may only apply during an elementary year. In acknowledgement of the research and differing philosophies among middle, junior high, and high schools, middle schools will be required to meet application requirements consistent with developmentally appropriate middle school models.
2. The minimum period of operation for public and private schools, including newly merged

schools, is five full school years. The school must be in its sixth full year of operation when the application is submitted, that is, schools submitting nomination packages for the current year in the fall of 2003 must have been in continuous operation since September 1998.

3. Previously recognized schools may reapply for recognition after a waiting period of five years. Program experience suggests that schools sometimes reapply because they find the self-assessment process intrinsically beneficial as a school improvement tool. In order to be recognized again, previously recognized schools must meet additional criteria related to continuing improvement and sharing of best practices. (See Previously Recognized Schools described below.)
4. ***Education YES!*** – Only school buildings receiving a grade of either an A or B under the Michigan *Education YES!* Accreditation Program and currently making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), as defined by the Michigan Department of Education, are eligible for consideration.
5. The nominated school must not be refusing the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
6. The OCR must not have issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
7. The U.S. Department of Justice must not have a pending suit against a school district alleging that the nominated school, or district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
8. The U.S. Department of Education must not have issued a monitoring report with findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that apply to the school or school district in question. If there are such findings, for the school to be eligible, the state or district must have corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PREPARING THE SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT

Overview

This nomination package is designed to provide a profile of the school and to offer an opportunity to highlight factors especially important to the local community. Completion of this nomination package is required in order to be considered for the Blue Ribbon Schools award. The package is divided into seven parts. It is estimated that it will take your school improvement team approximately 550 hours to complete the initial application.

Part I is used to determine whether the school meets the eligibility criteria.

Part II seeks background and demographic information about the school district and the school.

Part III provides a brief summary or "snapshot" of the school.

Part IV asks for a statement of the school's vision/mission or philosophy.

Part V asks for responses to specific questions that reflect learning-centered school criteria.

Part VI requires completion by previously recognized Blue Ribbon Schools only.

The summary section may be shared with other recognized schools and the press. It should be written as a stand-alone section, without reference to how deserving the school is of statewide recognition and without cross-references. It should be a concise, accurate description of the school and should include the school name, city, and state in the first sentence.

Overall Framework

The overall framework of criteria used in the Blue Ribbon Schools Program includes the following eight categories:

- A. Student Focus and Support
- B. School Organization and Culture
- C. Challenging Standards and Curriculum
- D. Active Teaching and Learning
- E. Professional Community
- F. Leadership and Educational Vitality
- G. School, Family, and Community Partnerships
- H. Indicators of Academic Success

Categories A, C, and D address the dynamic of student-teacher-content interaction that is the central core of the education process. These categories focus mainly on the classroom and its context. Categories B, E, and F focus on the context within schools that education research suggests are conditions for success, including organizational, cultural, and interpersonal factors. Category G covers the school's relationships with significant external stakeholders. The emphasis in category H shifts to results: the coherence of the school's overall assessment system, the use of assessment data to inform decisions and improve performance, and evidence of consistently outstanding or significantly improved student and school performance outcomes.

The criteria are comprehensive. The criteria are intended to address all important aspects of school operations. Yet the criteria are broad enough to suit diverse school contexts and to accommodate new or changing goals and strategies within any particular school.

The criteria are interrelated. Addressing the multiple, embedded, and interacting contexts of school life creates a dynamic linkage among the criteria. The systematic use of a broad composite of criteria should help schools to ensure that school improvement goals and strategies are balanced.

The criteria are nonprescriptive. Wide latitude is intended and accepted in how schools choose to meet the criteria. The focus is on results rather than on specific means or procedures. Schools often use the Blue Ribbon criteria and process in conjunction with more targeted or specific school improvement strategies.

The criteria are a basis for collaborative self-assessment. School responses to the overall framework should provide a profile of school strengths and areas for improvement. The criteria are a useful tool for self-assessment, reflection, strategic planning, and involvement of all relevant stakeholders in a common project.

Self-assessment is an effective school improvement strategy. Research and experience suggest that self-assessment benefits schools and fosters improvements in practice. Successful schools usually have a process for reflection and planning. *Thus, the criteria may assist schools in accomplishing something they ought to do in the normal course of their activities regardless of whether they choose to seek recognition.*

Using the scoring guidelines, the Review Panel will rate each of the responses and overall criteria categories as follows: Exemplary, Strong, Adequate, Inadequate, and Insufficient Evidence. **Additionally, the panel will judge whether the document makes sense as a whole.** For example, they will consider whether the vision, goals, practices, resources, and results are aligned across the various sections of the nomination package; and whether the document is data driven.

Previously Recognized Schools

It is the Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools Program's philosophy that the responsibility of public service accompanies the reward of recognition. As models of excellence and equity, Blue Ribbon Schools have much to share among themselves and with other schools that aspire to similar success. Blue Ribbon Schools are required to show they have interacted with other schools as a requirement for their application. District superintendents are asked to facilitate sharing. Additionally, the program expects that after recognition Blue Ribbon Schools will continue to seek ways to further improve themselves. Previously recognized schools are required to provide documentation to show how they are meeting the additional criteria as a previously recognized school.

Blue Ribbon recognition is only valid for the five years following its acquisition.

Questions About the Nomination Package

All questions concerning this nomination package should be addressed to Dr. Arthur T. Vrettas, program liaison for the Michigan Department of Education. He can be reached at (517) 241-2732 or by email at vrettasa@michigan.gov.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

February 12, 2003 – September 5, 2003

Schools work on their nomination packages, including answering the School Self-Assessment Criteria questions, for forwarding to the Michigan Department of Education in the Fall of 2003.

September 5, 2003

Applications are due in the Michigan Department of Education by 4:00 pm. Applications can be delivered in person (make arrangements in advance with Dr. Vrettas) or by mail to:

Dr. Arthur T. Vrettas
Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools Program
Michigan Department of Education
608 West Allegan
Lansing, Michigan 48909

October 13, 2003

State of Michigan Review Panel completes first review of school nominations.

October 15, 2003

State of Michigan Select Review Panel completes second review of school nominations.

October 17, 2003

Applicant Schools notified of possible site visitation by State of Michigan visitation teams.

Site visits. One-day visits are conducted at schools that have been recommended for a site visit. The role of the site team is to verify the accuracy of information in the nomination package and get answers to specific questions posed by the Review Panel. A substantial portion of time is spent in classroom observations. The site team also meets with school and district administrators, teachers, support staff, students, parents, and community members. The site team prepares a written report and forwards it to the Michigan Department of Education.

December 19, 2003

Final deadline for revised school applications to be sent to the Michigan Department of Education.

January 7, 2004
Selected Schools notified.

February – March, 2004
Recognition Ceremonies. 2003-2004 Blue Ribbon Schools celebrate their success at recognition ceremonies conducted at the local school building site with representation from the Michigan Department of Education and the State Board of Education in attendance.

Responsibility of Selected Schools

Once a school is selected as a Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary School, its responsibilities to the program begin. During the five-year recognition cycle, the school will be expected to provide readers for the selection of future Blue Ribbon Schools. Additionally, the school will provide, as needed, a site visitation team as part of the selection process. All costs for this assistance to be borne by the Blue Ribbon School's district.

THIS YEAR'S BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS

(To be announced at the State Board Meeting)

2002-2003 Michigan Blue Ribbon Exemplary Schools

Avondale Meadows Upper Elementary School
1435 West Auburn Road
Rochester Hills, Michigan 48309-4344
Ms. Susan Sonye, Principal

Carpenter Elementary School
2290 Flintridge
Orion, Michigan 48359-1612
Ms. Rose Edwards, Principal

Clear Lake Elementary School
2085 West Draher
Oxford, Michigan 48371
Mr. James Schwarz, Principal

Edwardsburg Intermediate Elementary School
9410 Section Street
Edwardsburg, Michigan 49112-9668
Mr. Scott Moellenbrandt, Principal

Ewell Elementary School
51041 Shelby Road
Shelby Township, Michigan 48316-4052
Mr. Michael Sturm, Principal

Lakes Elementary School
6849 Young Avenue
Rockford, Michigan 49341
Mr. David Downer, Principal

Leonard Elementary School
4401 Tallman
Troy, Michigan 48085
Ms. Joanelle Long, Principal

Maurice M. Wilde Elementary School
32343 Bunert
Warren, Michigan 48088-2951
Ms. Patricia Prill, Principal

Thomas Jefferson Elementary School
37555 Carol
Sterling Heights, Michigan 48310-3899
Mrs. Jennifer Davis, Principal

Washington Writers' Academy
1919 Portage Street
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001
Ms. Barbara Witzak, Principal

Wooddale Elementary School
34275 Oak Forest
Farmington Hills, Michigan 48076-2749
Ms. Lasenia Jones, Principal