

Two Duval County Public Schools' named Blue Ribbon Schools

Schools honored are academically superior or show dramatic gains in student achievement

JACKSONVILLE - U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings recently named Darnell-Cookman and James Weldon Johnson middle schools as 2008 No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools. The No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools award distinguishes and honors schools for helping students achieve at very high levels, and for making significant progress in closing the achievement gap.

For the past 26 years, this prestigious program has honored more than 5,800 of America's most successful schools.

"These Blue Ribbon Schools are an example of what teachers and students can achieve," Spellings said. "Now our challenge is to help other schools follow their lead by continuing to measure progress through No Child Left Behind, and by using the knowledge we've gained to replicate effective strategies and help every student improve."

The No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement to high levels. The schools are selected based on one of two criteria:

- Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance to high levels on state tests; and
- Schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent of their state on state tests or, in the case of private schools, in the top 10 percent of the nation on nationally-normed tests.

Under No Child Left Behind, schools must make Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, in reading (language arts) and mathematics. Each state – not the federal government – sets its own academic standards and benchmark goals.

"It is an honor to have two of our schools recognized as No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools," said Superintendent of Duval County Public Schools, Ed Pratt-Dannals. "Our schools work hard each year to ensure we are providing the highest level of education to all of our students."

A total of 413 schools nationwide can be nominated. This number is determined based on the number of K-12 students and the number of schools in each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The Chief State School Officer (CSSO) nominates public schools, and the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) submits private schools' nominations. The schools are invited by Secretary Spellings to submit an application for possible recognition as a No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon School. This year's winners will be honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. on October 20-21.

