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Eleven Virginia Schools Earn National Blue Ribbon Honors

The U.S. Department of Education has designated six Virginia public schools and five private schools as 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools. The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private K-12 schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement.

The public schools receiving National Blue Ribbon School status are as follows:

- Belmont Station Elementary in Loudoun County
- Kemp's Landing Magnet School in Virginia Beach
- Rich Acres Elementary in Henry County
- Richmond Community High in Richmond
- Rocky Mount Elementary in Franklin County
- Springville Elementary in Tazewell County

"Excellence knows no boundaries in Virginia," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright, who nominated the schools for federal recognition. "These schools serve diverse rural, urban and suburban communities and share a commitment to challenging students to learn and achieve at levels far beyond minimum standards."

All of the public 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools earned awards earlier this year through the Virginia Index of Performance program that recognizes schools and divisions that exceed state and federal accountability standards. Belmont Elementary, Kemp's Landing Magnet, Rich Acres Elementary and Rocky Mount Elementary earned the Governor's Award for Educational Excellence. Richmond Community High and Springville Elementary earned the Board of Education Excellence Award.

The Council for American Private Education nominates private schools for Blue Ribbon awards each year. The following five Catholic schools in the commonwealth were designated as National Blue Ribbon Schools:

- Our Lady of Lourdes School in Richmond
- Saint Ann Catholic School in Arlington
- Saint Matthew Catholic School in Virginia Beach
- Saint Thomas Aquinas Regional School in Woodbridge
- Star of the Sea Catholic School in Virginia Beach

The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program was established in 1982 to honor the country's most successful schools. Schools are selected based on one of two criteria: 1) performance on state assessments, or in the case of private schools, performance on national standardized tests; or 2) schools with at least 40 percent of students from disadvantaged backgrounds that raise achievement as measured by state assessments or national standardized tests.

The U.S. Department of Education will honor the nation's 256 public and 49 private 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools during a conference and awards ceremony November 14-15 in Washington, D.C. Since 1982, more than 6,500 schools nationwide have received federal Blue Ribbon designations.