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Commissioner Gagliardi Presents Blue Ribbon Schools to State Board of Education

Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr., today introduced New Jersey's six Blue Ribbon Schools for 2000-01 to the State Board of Education. The schools were among 264 selected for national recognition in a highly competitive program sponsored by the United States Department of Education.

"Blue Ribbon Schools represent the highest levels of excellence in education," said Commissioner Gagliardi. "Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco and I congratulate our six schools and we commend them for their commitment to quality education for all children."

New Jersey's Blue Ribbon Schools for 2000-01 are:

- Constable Elementary School, South Brunswick, Middlesex County
- Fredon Elementary School, Fredon Township, Sussex County
- Saint Matthias School, nonpublic, Somerset County
- Sunnymead School, Hillsborough Township, Somerset County
- Warnsdorfer School, East Brunswick, Middlesex County
- Whitehall Elementary School, Monroe Township, Gloucester County

Jay Doolan, acting assistant commissioner for the Division of Academic and Career Standards, described the rigorous, multistep process used to identify the schools for recognition in the program. Veteran educators conduct state reviews of prospective nominees and make recommendations to the New Jersey Department of Education. Each prospective school is also scrutinized by the appropriate county office of education to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations.

"In addition to conducting a rigorous state nomination process, the Department of Education offers extensive technical assistance to Blue Ribbon School applicants," Doolan said. "As a result, New Jersey has consistently ranked among the states with the highest percentage of schools selected as national schools of excellence."

The State Department of Education considers the reviews and recommendations before it nominates schools for the national competition. At the national level, nominees are screened and recommendations are made for site visits to verify the accuracy of the information the schools have provided and to gather any additional information the national panel has requested. Site visits are conducted by experienced educators, who observe the schools for two days and submit written reports. The panel considers the reports and makes recommendations to Secretary of Education Rod Paige for final recognition.

Blue Ribbon schools share the following common attributes:

- Strong leadership
- A sense of shared purpose among faculty, students, parents and the community
- A school climate conducive to effective teaching
- Programs that challenge all students
- An environment that promotes and believes the message that "all students can learn"

Established in 1982, the Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors elementary and secondary schools in alternate years. Since its inception, more than 4,000 schools have been recognized.