

2009 Guidance for Chief State School Officers
The No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon Schools Program

U.S. Department of Education



Nomination Process

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2009 No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon Schools Program Nomination Process

Introduction

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. Since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education’s Blue Ribbon Schools Program has honored many of America’s most successful schools. A Blue Ribbon Schools 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.

In 2002, the program was renewed to bring it in line with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This renewed program honors schools whose students achieve at very high levels or make significant progress in closing the achievement gap. The No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon Schools Program sets a high standard that should be a goal for all improving schools and schools striving for high levels of achievement. The program recognizes and presents as models both public and private elementary and secondary schools that meet either of two assessment criteria. (Specific definitions and eligibility requirements are in the section, Performance and Other Eligibility Requirements.) This document describes the public school nomination process.

- *High performing schools:* Schools, regardless of their demographics, that are in the top 10 percent of schools in their states as measured by state tests in both reading (English language arts) and mathematics.
- *Dramatically improved schools:* Schools that have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds and have dramatically improved student performance to high levels in reading (English language arts) and mathematics on state assessments.

At least one-third of the schools nominated by each state must have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Public schools must make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the current year.

These Blue Ribbon Schools are honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC. The applications from the award-winning schools are posted on the Department’s Web site. Summaries from a small group of Blue Ribbon Schools visited each year identify educational practices that have been successful in closing the achievement gap.

Public School Nomination Process

The Secretary invites each Chief State School Officer (CSSO), including the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), to nominate those schools that meet the criteria for recognition.

In submitting the list of nominated schools, the CSSO of each state must certify that the nominated schools meet the minimum requirements established by the Department and describe any other criteria used by the state to nominate the schools. States must rely on their state assessment systems to identify schools for submission to the Secretary. The nomination criteria, including assessments, must pertain equally to all schools nominated from the individual state.

Once the Secretary receives the nominations from the CSSO, the Department invites the nominated schools to submit applications for possible recognition as Blue Ribbon Schools.

The Secretary is eager to recognize schools that have shown success in closing the achievement gap. Although schools nominated as high performing do not have to meet the 40 percent disadvantaged criterion, the Secretary is very interested in recognizing high performing schools with a high percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Timeline for 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools

- November 2008: The Secretary sends a letter of invitation to the Chief State School Officers (CSSOs), the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), and the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) requesting the submission of information for nominated schools.
- December 3: Public school nominations from CSSOs, BIE, and DoDEA are due to the Department.
- December 5: The Department invites schools recommended by CSSOs, BIE, and DoDEA to apply for recognition as Blue Ribbon Schools.
- January 2009: CAPE selects its nominations.
- February 18: Completed public and private school (from CAPE) applications are due to the Department.
- March: Applications are reviewed for completeness and accuracy.
- April: An Assessment Panel, an invited team with expertise in state assessments, reviews the applications and verifies the eligibility of the schools according to the state test data.
- August: States certify that nominated public schools have met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).
- September: The Secretary announces the 2009 No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon Schools.
- Fall 2009: Two people from each school, the principal and a teacher, are invited to a ceremony in Washington, DC, where each school will receive a plaque and a flag signifying its status.

Performance and Other Eligibility Requirements

The CSSO must ensure that the schools meet the Department’s criteria for recognition before sending their names to the Department. The CSSO’s representative may also wish to review the completed applications before they are submitted.

Based on state data, the CSSO will certify that the nominated schools meet one of two eligibility criteria:

- 1) *High performing schools:* Regardless of the school’s percentage of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the school is high performing. “*High performing*” means that the achievement of the school’s students in at least the highest grade tested in the most recent year tested places the school in the top 10 percent of schools in the state on state assessments of reading (or English language arts) and mathematics. Disaggregated results for student subgroups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, must be similar to the results for all students tested. At a minimum, the subgroup test scores in the highest grade tested in the most recent year tested must meet the performance criterion for dramatically improved schools that defines the top 40 percent of schools. (See criterion 2.)

- 2) *Dramatically improved schools:* If at least 40 percent of the school’s students are from disadvantaged backgrounds, a school may qualify if the achievement of its students has dramatically improved to high levels. “*Dramatically improved to high levels*” is defined by the CSSO of each state but, at a minimum, means: (a) for at least the highest grade tested, the school has demonstrated a positive trend in test results from the earliest to the most recent year

tested, and (b) in at least the highest grade tested in the most recent year tested, the achievement of the school's students places the school in the top 40 percent of schools in the state on state assessments of reading (or English language arts) and mathematics. Disaggregated results for student subgroups, including students from disadvantaged backgrounds, must also show improvement similar to that of all students. The Secretary is looking for schools that have improved test scores for five years in at least the highest grade tested beginning below the test scores of schools in the top 40 percent of schools in the state to above the test scores of schools in the top 40 percent in the state.

A student from a “*disadvantaged background*” is defined by the CSSO of each state. The definition must include students who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals and may include students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient, migrant, or receiving services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Test results for each grade tested during the most recent five years must be reported even if the state has revised or changed its assessments during that period. In the rare cases where five years of test results are not available, an explanation should be provided in the application. Test results for subgroups must be reported if they constitute more than 10 percent of the reported school enrollment. As the final step, public schools must also make Adequate Yearly Progress in the current school year.

At least one-third of the schools nominated by each state must have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds in the current school year, whether these schools show dramatic improvement to high levels or are high performing. For example, if a state nominates nine schools, at least three must have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds. States may not nominate schools that have been in school improvement status within the last two years.

Schools also must meet the following requirements:

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. Preschools are not eligible. Even if the state separates the school into grade levels for administrative purposes, schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school. For example, a K-12 school will be judged at a minimum on assessment results in the highest grade tested in the high school part of the school.
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2008-2009 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grade 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.
6. The nominated school has not received the No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, or 2008.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

8. OCR has not 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.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

What exactly does the state need to do to nominate public schools?

The following procedures are designed to help states nominate schools for the NCLB–Blue Ribbon Schools Program.

Procedure I. Determine the minimum percentage of students meeting or exceeding the state standard (who are proficient or advanced) in reading and in math for schools in the top 10 percent in your state for every grade in which state reading and math assessments are administered. (You will be asked on the state nomination form to describe the students' test data you used to calculate these cutoff percentages. Please ask your schools to use the same method to record test data on their applications.)

A. For reading (or English language arts) in each of the assessed grades, follow these steps:

- Step 1: For each school in the state serving that grade, determine the percentage of students in that grade meeting or exceeding the state standard in reading (e.g., the percentage of students who are proficient plus the percentage who are advanced).
- Step 2: Rank order all of these schools, from the highest to the lowest, based on the percentage of students proficient or advanced in that grade.
- Step 3: Identify the schools in the top 10 percent of the list of rank-ordered schools from Step 2.
- Step 4: From the schools in the top 10 percent, identify the school with the lowest percentage of students proficient or advanced in that grade. Note that the lowest school in the top 10 percent of all schools is the same as the school at the 90th percentile of all schools.
- Step 5: In Column I of the table for reading (or English language arts) results at the end of this document, record in the row for the appropriate grade the percentage of students proficient or advanced in reading in that grade identified in Step 4.
- Step 6: Repeat the procedure for reading in *each assessed grade*.

B. For mathematics, repeat the above steps.

The values entered into Column I of the reading and math tables at the end of this document are referred to as the “cut scores” for the 90th percentile school at each assessed grade in reading and math.

Procedure II: Determine the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the state standard (who are proficient or advanced) in reading and in math for schools in the top 40 percent in your state for every grade in which state reading and math assessments are administered. (You will be asked on the state nomination form to describe the students' test data you used to calculate these cutoff percentages. Please ask your schools to use the same method to record test data on their applications.)

A. For reading (or English language arts) in each of the assessed grades, follow these steps:

- Step 1: For each school in the state serving that grade, determine the percentage of students in that grade meeting or exceeding the state standard in reading (e.g., the percentage of students who are proficient plus the percentage who are advanced).
- Step 2: Rank order all of these schools, from the highest to the lowest, based on the percentage of students proficient or advanced in that grade.
- Step 3: Identify the schools in the top 40 percent of the list of rank-ordered schools from Step 2.
- Step 4: From the schools in the top 40 percent, identify the school with the lowest percentage of students proficient or advanced in that grade. Note that the lowest school in the top 40 percent of all schools is the same as the school at the 60th percentile of all schools.
- Step 5: In Column II of the table for reading (or English language arts) results at the end of this document; record in the row for the appropriate grade the percentage of students proficient or advanced in reading in that grade identified in Step 4.
- Step 6: Repeat the procedure for reading in *each assessed grade*.

B. For mathematics, repeat the above steps.

The values entered into Column II of the reading and math tables at the end of this document are referred to as the “cut scores” for the 60th percentile school at each assessed grade in reading and math.

Procedure III: Select and Nominate Schools

To select schools for nomination for the program, schools must meet the requirements on pages 3-5 in this document. The following information is intended to clarify these requirements. States may use additional criteria in the selection process to nominate schools to the Secretary.

1. Poverty Status

States must nominate at least one-third of the schools from those with at least 40 percent of the students from disadvantaged backgrounds, whether the schools show dramatic improvement to high levels (in the top 40 percent of schools) or are high performing (in the top 10 percent of schools).

2. High Performing Schools Assessment Data

- A. High performing schools must be in the top 10 percent of schools (at or above the 90th percentile of schools) on state assessments in both reading (or English language arts) and mathematics in the highest grade and most recent year tested even if that grade has fewer than five years of data. The percentage of students proficient or advanced in the highest grade and most recent year tested must equal or exceed the cut score for that grade in Column I of the reading or math table at the end of this document. High performing schools are eligible regardless of the percentage of disadvantaged students.

- B. Test results for the most recent year tested in grades other than the highest grade tested and disaggregated test results should also be at or near the levels of all students tested at the highest grade. At a minimum, the subgroup test scores in the highest grade tested in the most recent year tested must meet the performance criterion for dramatically improved schools that defines the top 40 percent of schools.

3. Dramatically Improved Schools Assessment Data

- A. Dramatically improved schools must have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- B. Dramatically improved schools must be in the top 40 percent of schools (at or above the 60th percentile of schools) on state assessments in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics in the highest grade in the most recent year tested. This means that the percentage of students proficient or advanced in the highest grade tested in the most recent year tested must equal or exceed the cut score for that grade in Column II of the reading or math table at the end of this document.

If a dramatically improved school does not have five years of test data for the highest grade tested in reading (or English language arts) or mathematics, the school must also be in the top 40 percent of schools (at or above the 60th percentile of schools) on state assessments in reading (or English language arts) or mathematics in the most recent year tested for the highest grade in which there are five years of test data.

- C. Dramatically improved schools must show dramatic improvement as defined by the state, and they must at least demonstrate a positive trend in test results in the highest grade tested from the earliest to the most recent year for which test results are provided. For example, if 67 percent of the students are “proficient or advanced” in reading for grade 6 in 2003-2004, more than 67 percent of students must be “proficient or advanced” in reading for grade 6 in 2007-2008.

If a dramatically improved school does not have five years of test data for the highest grade tested in reading (or English language arts) or mathematics, the school must at least demonstrate a positive trend in test results from the earliest to the most recent year for the highest grade in which there are five years of data.

- D. Test results in grades other than the highest grade tested and disaggregated test results should also show improvement at a rate similar to that of all students.

4. Data for Student Groups with Less than Ten Students

Subgroup test results based on fewer than 10 students shall never be reported, except as noted below for small schools. The number of students tested, however, shall always be reported. Please note that small schools must report student test results for all students in a grade even if these results are based on fewer than 10 students in order to confirm that the school meets the assessment cut score. Test results for all students in a grade based on fewer than 10 students will be deleted after eligibility is determined.

5. Limited Test Data

If a school only has test results for one grade and it is the lowest grade served by the school (e.g., in grade 6 for a 6-8 school or grade 9 for a 9-12 high school), the results of that one grade cannot qualify the school for nomination.

6. Additional Important Guidance

- A. Once schools are selected for nomination, please confirm that the percentage of students proficient or advanced in both reading and math in the highest grade in the most recent year tested qualifies the school according to the cut scores recorded in the tables at the end of this document. Also, please confirm that dramatically improved schools demonstrate a positive trend in test results from the earliest to the most recent year in the highest grade in which test results are provided for the past five years.
- B. Please also contact the school to ensure that the school is interested in completing the application according to the process found on the Department's Web site at the following address: www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/awards.html. Please substitute another eligible school if a school has no interest in the program. It is the Department's intention that all schools nominated both qualify and apply for the NCLB–Blue Ribbon Schools Program.

What exactly should be sent to the Department?

Please provide the information at the end of this document to the Department by December 3, 2008, using an online form. Each state liaison will be given an ID code to log on to the Web site at <http://blueribbon.rmcre.com> to complete the online state nomination form. The original signed cover sheet only should be mailed by expedited mail (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) or faxed to Aba Kumi, Director, NCLB–Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173, fax: 202-260-7464.

In early December, the Department will invite the schools to apply. School applications are due by **February 18, 2009**. Schools are required to submit their applications online. Each nominated school will be given an ID code to submit the online application. We recommend that the state review the applications before final submission to the U.S. Department of Education NCLB–Blue Ribbon Schools Program to ensure that the test results are accurately stated and that the narrative sections reflect the quality expected by the CSSO. This review would also serve to verify that the school meets the assessment eligibility requirements of the NCLB–Blue Ribbon Schools Program. We also encourage the CSSO to have the state assessment director or the director's designee verify that the schools' test results are accurate and consistent with state reported data.

**Nomination for
2009 No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon Schools Award**

State _____

Each state liaison will be issued an ID code to log on to the Web site at <http://blueribbon.rmcses.com> to complete the online state nomination form. There are two parts to this document. The first contains a list of the nominated schools that includes the principal’s name; the name, address, telephone number, and fax number for the nominated school; and other pertinent information. The list clearly designates the schools as being in one of three categories: a) in the top 10 percent of the state with at least 40 percent disadvantaged students; b) in the top 40 percent of the state with at least 40 percent disadvantaged students and dramatically improved; and c) in the top 10 percent of the state with fewer than 40 percent disadvantaged students. The second part contains I. Nomination Information and II. Data Tables.

The contact person for the state for the NCLB–Blue Ribbon Schools Program is:

Name _____

Title _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ FAX _____

E-mail _____

Please print this page, and send a signed cover sheet only by expedited mail (such as Express Mail, FedEx, or UPS) or fax to:

Aba S. Kumi
NCLB-BRS Program
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW, 5E103
Washington, DC 20202-8173

202-401-1767 202-260-7464 (fax) Aba.Kumi@ed.gov
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As Chief State School Officer, I certify that the schools on the attached list meet the minimum requirements established by my state for “dramatically improved schools” or “high performing schools” as defined by the Blue Ribbon Schools criteria.

Signed _____

Title _____ Date _____

I. Nomination Information: Please provide the following information about the school nominations and state assessment system.

1. Basic information on each nominated school, that is, name of the principal and the school name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Please also provide the size of the school population, the grade levels in the school, and the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals at the time of the nomination,
2. The schools should be delineated into three separate groups, with at least one-third of the schools having at least 40 percent disadvantaged students:
 - a) Group A - schools in the top 10 percent of the state with at least 40 percent disadvantaged students.
 - b) Group B - schools in the top 40 percent of the state with at least 40 percent disadvantaged students that have dramatically improved student achievement to high levels.
 - c) Group C - schools in the top 10 percent of the state with less than 40 percent disadvantaged students.
3. The cover sheet serving as the certification document signed by the CSSO.
4. A very brief explanation of the state’s assessment system. If the information is on the state’s Web site, please reference the Web address where the information may be found. Please describe the students’ test data you used to calculate the cutoff percentages found in the data tables. For example, did the data include all students participating in the assessment, or did these data include only those students the school was held accountable for in determining AYP?
5. What are the terms used in your state to describe the different levels of student performance? For example, below basic, basic, proficient, advanced.
6. Of those terms, which designates “proficient” in the state’s assessment system?
Level: _____ Terminology: _____.
7. What is the average per pupil state expenditure for all schools? \$_____
8. A brief explanation of the state’s definition of disadvantaged student, such as those who are eligible for free and reduced-price school meals, students with disabilities, and students who are limited English proficient, migrant, or receiving services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

II. Data Tables

Follow procedures and steps on pages 5-6 in this document to complete these tables. Round numbers to the nearest whole number.

READING (OR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS) CUT SCORES

2007-08 Test Name _____ Year test began: _____

Grade	Column I – 90th	Column II – 60th
	% of students proficient plus % advanced for the school at the 90th percentile when schools are ranked according to % of students proficient plus % advanced	% of students proficient plus % advanced for the school at the 60th percentile when schools are ranked according to % of students proficient plus % advanced
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		

MATHEMATICS CUT SCORES

2007-08 Test Name _____ Year test began: _____

Grade	Column I – 90th	Column II – 60th
	% of students proficient plus % advanced for the school at the 90th percentile when schools are ranked according to % of students proficient plus % advanced	% of students proficient plus % advanced for the school at the 60th percentile when schools are ranked according to % of students proficient plus % advanced
2		
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