



## **Archdiocese of Newark**

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### **Seven Archdiocese of Newark Schools Named National Blue Ribbon Schools**

Seven Catholic elementary schools within the Archdiocese of Newark are among 14 schools in New Jersey, and 304 nationwide, recently recognized by the US Department of Education as 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools.

The Catholic schools receiving the Blue Ribbon designation -- St. John the Apostle School, Clark; St. John's Academy, Hillsdale; St. Joseph School, Oradell; Our Lady of Mercy Academy, Park Ridge; Our Lady of the Lake School, Verona; Holy Trinity Interparochial School, Westfield; St. Elizabeth School, Wyckoff -- are the only Catholic schools in the state to receive this recognition this year.

In announcing this year's honorees, US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated that the schools will be honored officially in November at an awards ceremony in the nation's capital. The list of 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools includes 255 public schools and 49 private and parochial schools.

Rev. Msgr. Kevin M. Hanbury, Ed.D., archdiocesan Vicar for Education and Superintendent of Schools, said the Blue Ribbon designation enhances the vision of the Archdiocese for the ministry to sustain and advance Catholic education. "We are providing academic excellence for the people of New Jersey," Msgr. Hanbury declared. "We have many gifted schools here in the Archdiocese of Newark."

George V. Corwell, Ed.D., the director of the Office of Education for the Trenton-based New Jersey Catholic Conference, said the Blue Ribbons demonstrate the quality of Catholic education in the Archdiocese and the state of New Jersey. "It certainly proves again the value of Catholic education in response to critics who say Catholic schools aren't subject to state regulations like public schools," he said.

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Corwell also pointed out that the Blue Ribbon awards come at a time when the long-stalled legislation for the Opportunity Scholarship Act (OSA) sits in the NJ Assembly Budget Committee (A-2810). The New Jersey Education Association has been a staunch opponent of the bill's various iterations during the last six years.

The OSA would give students and their families a choice in designated districts that have chronically failing public schools. The bill would provide low-income families with funding so that students would have the opportunity to attend a participating nonpublic school like a Catholic school or another public school of their choice.

Msgr. Hanbury echoed this statement by saying: "OSA can serve any student in a participating district whose family income meets the criteria in the bill. It makes it feasible for kids to go to the school of their choice. The Blue Ribbon award makes Catholic schools an even more attractive option compared with the failing public schools in a given district."

Since 1982 the U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools Program has honored public and private schools that are either high performing or have improved student achievement. The seven schools in the Archdiocese of Newark receiving the award have been recognized as high performing schools.

Schools recognized as high performing schools are schools ranked among each state's highest performing schools as measured by their performance on state assessments or, in the case of private and parochial schools, schools that score at the highest performance level on nationally-normed tests.

Public schools eligible for the Blue Ribbon Schools Award are nominated by their Chief State School Officer based on the school's performance on state assessments. The Council for American Private Education (CAPE), which is permitted to nominate 50 schools each year, nominates private and parochial schools. Schools nominated by CAPE must have scores on national standardized tests that place the school in the top 15 percent of schools nationwide in student achievement in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics. Each of the 2011 Blue Ribbon schools from the Archdiocese met this criteria based on the school's 2010 TerraNova scores.

In addition to the student achievement criteria, eligible schools must have an enrollment of at least ten students in each of the grades tested during the most recent five years. Each of the eligible schools invited to complete in the Blue Ribbon program provided required demographic data, an overview of the school and the community it

serves, an analysis of assessment results, and descriptions of specific elements of the school's program that contribute to students' academic achievement. Additional information about the National Blue Ribbon Awards Program can be found at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html>.

The Archdiocese of Newark, which encompasses Bergen, Essex, Hudson and Union Counties, maintains 81 Catholic elementary schools and 31 high schools.

The complete list of 2011 National Blue Ribbon Schools can be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/nationalblueribbonsschools>.

Media outlets that would like to visit any of the Archdiocese of Newark Blue Ribbon Schools may contact the Office of Communications – 973-497-4186 – to schedule an interview with the faculty and students.

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