

## CONNECTICUT NEWS

### **Proud To Wear Blue Ribbons**

#### **■3 Area Schools Singled Out For National Award**

September 23, 2006

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"Oh my gosh, I have chills! I have chills, oh my gosh, oh my gosh!" screamed Lucia Trudeau, principal of St. Joseph School in the Rockville section of Vernon.

She had just learned Friday afternoon that her school, along with Hartford Magnet Middle School and the Connecticut International Baccalaureate Academy in East Hartford, had been named Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. As part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the coveted award recognizes schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap between poor and minority students and their more advantaged peers or whose students achieve at very high levels.

They are the only three Connecticut schools selected and are among 250 schools honored nationwide.

The federal education department has been giving the honor to high-achieving schools since 1982 but 2003 was the first year that it created a special program for schools that serve many poor children. To qualify for a nomination, schools must have at least 40 percent of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch and the school must have made improvements in test scores for each of the previous three years.

In recent years, Simpson-Waverly School and Dwight Elementary School in Hartford, Windham Center School and the Thomas G. Alcorn Elementary School in Enfield received Blue Ribbon status.

This year's Blue Ribbon schools will be honored at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., Nov. 9 and 10.

"We are absolutely, absolutely thrilled to death and proud of our school," Trudeau said. "This is very exciting."

Trudeau said that officials at her elementary Catholic school didn't want to jinx their chances of getting the Blue Ribbon status so they hadn't planned a party, but she said Friday that there probably will be a huge celebration in October during a school day.

"What it shows for us is that every child is capable of wonderful things and it doesn't matter who the child is or what their background is or where they come from," she said.

Cecilia Green, principal of the Hartford magnet school, said she and other school employees have been waiting in emotional agony to hear the results and were extremely excited when they learned Friday morning. Green, who last year replaced the previous principal, Delores Bolton, called her a legend who helped bring the students to this status. Bolton is now an assistant superintendent for magnet schools in Hartford.

Green said the honor is "an affirmation of what our mission is, that we prepare the best and the brightest kids for the most competitive high schools. It's really an affirmation of what we do and combining kids from the city and suburbs has really translated into success."

Arthur Arpin, who is in his first year as principal at the East Hartford academy, said, "I'm thrilled...It's just another acknowledgment of the great work the staff and students do."

Arpin said that award also validates the vision of Michael Abelon, a longtime East Hartford educator who helped found the academy six years ago. The academy is a selective magnet school with a curriculum based on international standards.

"His legacy is all around this building and this is the culmination of all he has done," Arpin said of Abelon, who died last year.

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