

Bluewater/ Bluewater Elementary School: Nationally Recognized Blue Ribbon School

By Donald Jaramillo
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It's official, **Bluewater Elementary School will soon fly a Blue Flag alongside its New Mexico and United States Flags. The blue flag denotes the school's award of being a nationally recognized Blue Ribbon school.**

The 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.** In addition to being honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC, where each school receives a plaque and flag signifying their status, these schools serve as models for other schools throughout the nation.

Secretary of Education Veronica Garcia attended the school on Tuesday for the official ceremony.

"The application went through no problem, however, I had my fingers crossed until the Adequate Yearly Progress scores came out," Garcia told the students, parents, school staff and Grants/Cibola County Schools district officials. The small school needed to pass AYP in order to qualify for the award. Bluewater Elementary School was the only school in the district to pass AYP, primarily because of improvement in reading and dramatic improvement in math skills.

"When the scores came I first checked to see if Bluewater Elementary School has passed and guess what?" she asked, "you did."

Garcia spoke for approximately 20 minutes to the assembly.

"On three I want you guys to yell 'go Panthers,'" she started the speech. The panther is the school's mascot.

"Go Panthers," the students screamed and echoed through the small village in western Cibola County. Balloons and ribbons decorated Bluewater Village from just off the interstate all the way to the school.

"You guys are special," Garcia told the school. "One of 313 in the nation and one of three in the state. A blue flag will soon fly in front of your school so everyone will see what a wonderful school you are. You will be getting visitors from throughout the state because other schools want to see how special you are," she added.

"We, New Mexico Department of Education, nominated you. If you work hard and focus you can succeed... your improvement has been amazing."

Second year Principal Sergio Castanon said, "This award belongs to the staff. You are a wonderful and great staff."

Superintendent Kilino Marquez told the students, "It takes a bunch of people to be successful; students, teachers, staff and parents. Bluewater Elementary School is a wonderful school and congratulations, you guys are a Blue Ribbon School." School board members Earl Chavez, Jerry Smith, Sharon McKendrick and William Estevan were in attendance. Dion Sandoval was unable to make the ceremony.

The school will be presented with a Blue Ribbon flag in November at an official Blue Ribbon School ceremony in Washington, D.C. Principal Castanon, along with the five teachers from the school, will be attending the event in order to receive the award. According to Assistant Superintendent Gloria Chavez, central office employees of the district are scheduled to substitute for the principal and teachers in order for them to make the trip. "That is the least we can do, they deserve to make the trip," she said.

Lastly, the ceremony closed with school Student President Tye Robinson making a statement at the podium: "I believe: the success of the students at our school is contributed to our classroom size and the individualized attention we get; the students at this school focus on learning and achieving their goals, and the students are always happy to be at the school; Bluewater Elementary is lucky to have such great teachers that are so concerned with our education, the teachers are patient and are always willing to explain the problem to the best of their abilities; and it is nice that some of our parents also attend this school, it makes you feel like part of the community."