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News Release

For Release
Tuesday, Sept. 9, 2008

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Education Department names two Sac City sites national Blue Ribbon schools

Two Sacramento City Unified School District campuses were named 2008 No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools, U.S. Department of Education Margaret Spellings announced earlier today.

West Campus High School and Golden Empire Elementary School are the only schools in Sacramento County to win the award and two of 32 in the state. A total of 320 schools nationwide received the designation this year.

“This is a credit to the hard work at the schools and that includes the administration, teachers, support staff, and, of course, the students and their parents,” Interim Superintendent Susan E. Miller said. “We’re very proud of this prestigious accomplishment. Now, we’ll take time to have collegial discussions so that we can replicate their extraordinary work at our other sites.”

The No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors schools that are either academically superior or demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement to high levels. The schools are selected based on one of two criteria:

- schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that dramatically improve student performance to high levels on state tests; and
- schools whose students, regardless of background, achieve in the top 10 percent of their state on state tests or in the case of private schools in the top 10 percent of the nation on nationally-normed tests.

Under No Child Left Behind, schools must make Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, in reading (language arts) and mathematics. Each state—not the federal government—sets its own academic standards and benchmark goals.

Evelyn Baffico, the second-year principal at West Campus said the award was not only a reflection of the work being done on her campus, but of the entire district. “West Campus did not do this alone,” Baffico said. “It started at home and continued into preschool and kindergarten. We have to share this with every school that impacted these students. I want to thank every parent, preschool, elementary school and middle school who helped these students achieve.”

Irene Eister, the principal at Golden Empire, said that her community has supported the intense effort to ensure each child succeeds at her school site. “This means our constant hard work has been validated,” Eister said. It is all of us working hand in hand to get the best possible education for all of our students. All of us work together. We cannot do it by ourselves.”

A total of 413 schools nationwide can be nominated. This number is determined based on the number of K-12 students and the number of schools in each state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The Chief State School Officer (CSSO) nominates public schools, and the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) submits private schools' nominations. The schools are invited by Secretary Spellings to submit an application for possible recognition as a No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon School. This year's winners will be honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. on October 20-21.