



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

August 29, 2025

Dear Chief State School Officer,

The National Blue Ribbon Schools program is a recognition program jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Education (USED) and state Departments of Education. USED sets the criteria for “High Performing” and “Achievement Gap Closing” schools, and state liaisons then nominate schools that meet these definitions based on state assessment results. The important work of identifying blue ribbon schools is done at the state level.

In the spirit of Returning Education to the States, USED is ending its role in the program. State leaders are best positioned to recognize excellence in local schools based on educational achievements that align with their communities’ priorities for academic accomplishment and improvement. Awards conceived by those closest to the communities and families served by local schools will do more to encourage meaningful reforms than a one-size-fits-all standard established by a distant bureaucracy in Washington, D.C.

Today’s announcement gives states additional flexibility to tailor their recognition programs to celebrate exemplary schools that are achieving their unique educational goals. For example, a state focused on improving literacy or science achievement might design a program that honors schools excelling in those specific areas. Others may wish to focus on success in preparing students for the workforce, apprenticeship opportunities, or postsecondary studies.

The Department hereby discontinues the national program. States and associations are encouraged to recognize their nominees for 2025 and creatively fashion new recognition programs to celebrate excellence in their communities.

Sincerely,

Madi Biedermann  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Office of Communications and Outreach