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News Release

Five Colorado Elementary Schools Awarded 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools

Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones today congratulated five Colorado schools named by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan as 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools.

"Three of the schools on our list are dramatically improving student performance with at least 40 percent of students from disadvantaged backgrounds," said Commissioner Jones. "This is a tremendous accomplishment for our state, especially in light of all the work we are doing to close achievement gaps. Clearly all five schools serve as models for other schools in our state and throughout the nation."

The five schools are Chipeta School in Colorado Springs (Colorado Springs School District 11); Haaff Elementary School and Morton Elementary School, both in Pueblo (Pueblo City Schools District 60); High Peaks Elementary School in Boulder (Boulder Valley School District RE-2) and Soaring Eagles School in Colorado Springs (Harrison School District 2). Haaff, Morton and Soaring Eagles are the schools with at least 40 percent of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"These Blue Ribbon Schools have shown that all children can learn with appropriate supports," said Secretary Duncan. "They are producing outstanding results for their students. Some have shown dramatic improvements in places where students are overcoming the challenges of poverty, and others serve as examples of consistent excellence that can be a resource for other schools. They are places where improved teaching and learning benefits every student, and where students are

challenged to meet high expectations with the active support of teachers, parents and the community."

The award honors public and private elementary, middle and high schools that are either academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement and helped close gaps in achievement among minority and disadvantaged students.

The schools are selected based on one of two criteria:

- 1) 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; and
- 2) Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that demonstrate dramatic improvement of student performance to high levels on state tests or nationally-normed tests.

In addition, public schools must meet Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, in reading (language arts) and math. Each state, not the federal government, sets its own academic standards and benchmark goals.

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 Duncan to submit an application for possible recognition as a Blue Ribbon School.

This year's winners, 264 public and 50 private, will be honored at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, Nov. 3. For the past 27 years, more than 6,150 of America's schools have received this coveted award.

A list of the 2009 Blue Ribbon Schools is available at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/awards.html>

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